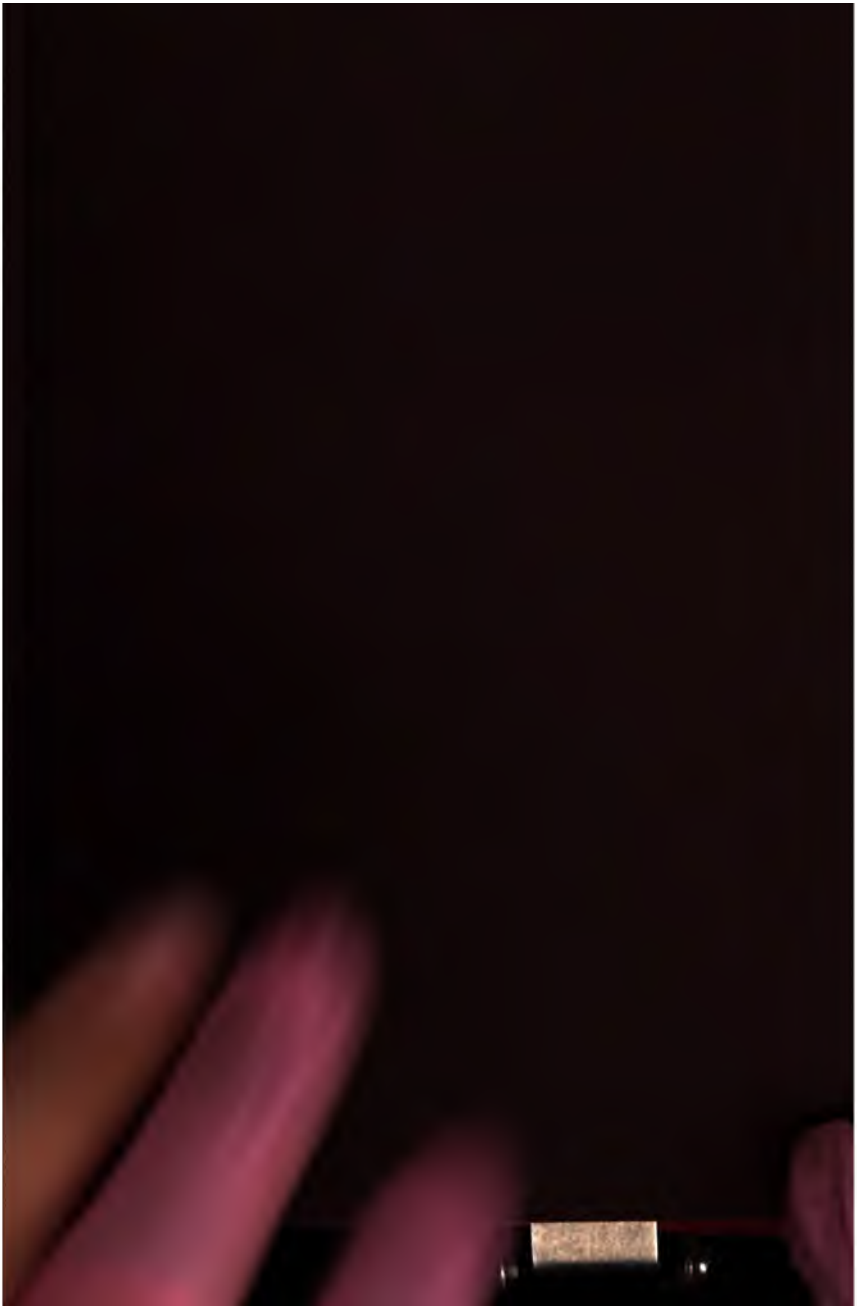

THE CHURCH IN RELATION TO THE STATE.

BY THE LATE

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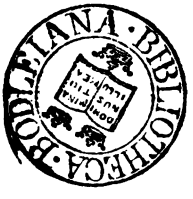

Second Edition.

EDINBURGH: JOHNSTONE, HUNTER, & CO.
GLASGOW: THOMAS MURRAY & SON.
LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.
ABERDEEN: A. & R. MILNE. BELFAST: C. AITCHISON.
1872.

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PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY,
EDINBURGH AND LONDON.

RECOMMENDATORY NOTICE.

THIS work is from the pen of one who was a most powerful champion on the side of National Religion. The late excellent and accomplished Dr Gibson occupied a foremost place in the struggle so successfully maintained fully thirty-five years ago, in behalf of the duty of nations and their rulers to acknowledge and promote the cause and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. This he did, not only by maintaining what has been called the principle of Church Establishments directly on Scriptural grounds, but by refuting plausible objections to that principle. In the present volume a specimen is given of each of these forms of defence. One of the most plausible arguments against Church Establishments consisted in a bold allegation that the Church of Christ was pure till the time of Constantine, and that after what Constantine was alleged to have done in the way of establishing the Church, she gradually sank into corruption. Dr Gibson, on the other hand, in the first treatise here reprinted,—which was originally published in 1833,—examined and exposed this unfounded allegation. He demonstrated that, instead of its being founded on truth, it was entirely baseless. This able and learned treatise—which received the cordial approbation of Drs M'Crie and Cunningham, and was never answered—has been long out of print, although there have been many demands for it from various quarters from year to year. The second treatise—which was originally

PART II.

The Moral Law applicable to the Social Constitution.

PART I.

THE

PRINCIPLE

OF

VOLUNTARY CHURCHES,

AND

NOT THE PRINCIPLE OF AN ESTABLISHMENT,

PROVED TO BE

THE REAL ORIGIN

OF

ROMISH AND PRIESTLY DOMINATION.

PREFACE.

THERE are few subjects upon which so many unsound or defective notions prevail, as upon the question of Church Establishments; and no one part of that question is so ill understood, or so entirely misrepresented, as the consequences to the interests of religion of what is usually called Constantine's Establishment of Christianity. The present Essay has for its object to set this matter somewhat in its true light, and to afford, within a short compass, to those who will peruse it, the means of determining, on adequate proof, whether the corruptions that preceded, accompanied, and followed it, are owing to what is called the "Voluntary Church" principle, or the principle of Establishments. The author of this Essay is of opinion that they are owing to the Voluntary, and not to the Establishment principle—and believes that he has adduced ample historical testimony in support of his opinion.

He would wish to impress upon his countrymen, not merely the importance of the great religious principles and general interests involved in this momentous question, but also the necessity of having the public mind well instructed on the subject. All the great changes that have lately taken place, some of them for the better, and some of them for the worse, have arisen from small beginnings, and have been brought about as much by the union, determination, and perseverance of their promoters, as by the soundness of their arguments. The friends of Establishments, who, in

this country at least, are the friends of true religion, should not rest secure in their present position, nor content themselves with the present majority of the public voice in their favour. They should not content themselves with a bare toleration of their existence; but, deeply convinced of their strong foundation in the immutable moral principles of the Word of God, and consequently in sound reason and just expediency, they should urgently press them on public attention, boldly assail the opposite principles, and endeavour to acquire an accession of strength in the public mind. There is nothing *stationary* in this world. Unless a principle be gaining strength, it will most assuredly be losing it.

It might be of great importance to ascertain what is the actual strength of the Establishment principle in this country. In the view of the author, it will be found exactly in proportion to the prevalence of true religion. Established Churches have many, and these as yet not weak, accessory supports. These, however, any attentive observer must perceive, are fast breaking up, and their main security must rest on their scriptural foundation. This foundation, it must be confessed, is not at this moment very deeply or widely laid in the national character; and, in this way, it is with grief admitted that the enemies of Establishments have their greatest advantage, and, it is believed, their strongest hopes. On this foundation, however, must their friends take up their position. Let them not obstinately cling by abuses. By doing so they will only put weapons into the hand of the infidel, the Papist (who, for ultimate ends, is their enemy,) the irreligious, and, I am sorry to add, of their equally determined, though somewhat strangely associated ally, the Voluntary Churchman. Let acknowledged abuses be speedily, though cautiously removed—not as a sacrifice to the power of parties, but to the just demands of truth—and let the great religious principle of the Reformation, derived from the light of nature, as well as of Scripture, be loudly, honestly, and

perseveringly proclaimed; namely, that it is the duty of all governments to promote true religion among their subjects; and that not by the absurd and dangerous method of the absolute negation of all duty or interest in the matter, but by positive effort. They might have difficulties, as human beings experience in every situation, in the determination, in some supposed cases, of what is best; but like them also, they must in duty encounter the difficulties, should they occur, and not shrink from them. They, like others, are responsible to God. In the meantime no such difficulties exist in this country.*

For these general reasons, the author of this Essay, though he disclaims the slightest desire of subjecting any individual to any other inconvenience, even for "pretended liberty of conscience," than what is necessary for the existence and preservation of social order—yet, conceiving the principle of an Established Church essential to the security and advancement of the Church of Christ, to the great interests of national morality, and the safety of the State—that is, of just and lawful government,—he hesitates not to profess the opinion, that its friends should vigorously assail the opposite principle, and do what they can to destroy it—to destroy it, not by civil pains and penalties, but by exposing its dangers and fallacies, and by pressing on the community the strong arguments for the support of national churches, in Scripture, reason, and expediency, that they may be more and more inwoven with the institutions and feelings of the country.

The writer of this Essay trusts that, though he has confined himself to one department of the question of Establish-

* To this the following admirable observation is perfectly applicable:—"These controverted points among the Casuists, so full of difficulties when they are proposed in generals, are easy to resolve when they come to particular cases: and conscience rightly consulted, and in persons who have not stifled it with a wilful ignorance, will easily clear these doubts. For God leaves not the mind of those to wander under any uncertainties of importance, who tread in the paths described in His commandments."—*Father Paul's Treatise on Benefices* chap. lii.

ments, the tenor of which is to show their expediency, he shall not be accused, as has been of late too much, and rather unfairly, the fashion in certain quarters, of defending them on that ground alone. His object is rather to illustrate the opinion, that what has been so often proved to be founded in Scripture, is alike founded in just expediency. Indeed, there is nothing more pleasing to a Christian than to discover, in every inquiry he can make, the truth of scriptural principles beautifully reflected back in a sound and healthful expediency.

The author has only to add in the way of preface, that he does not pretend to have produced an Essay distinguished either for elegance of style, or depth of historical research. It has been the work of a few days, snatched from the paramount demands of a laborious office. The views he has elicited, he believes to be such as to merit publication ; and if he shall be the means of inducing others of greater talents, learning, and leisure, to undertake their illustration, he shall not have rendered an unimportant service to the cause of truth. His aim being to produce evidence, he does not think it necessary to apologise for the length and number of his quotations.

GLASGOW, *April* 24, 1833.

THE PRINCIPLE OF VOLUNTARY CHURCHES

PROVED TO BE

THE ORIGIN OF ROMISH DOMINATION.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT "the truth will take care of itself," is no new maxim. It has lately, however, been put forth with unusual frequency, and with an air of novelty and triumph. Yet it is more specious than solid. While it seems a compliment to truth, it is in reality no more than an apology, not merely for the toleration, but even for the support of error. In the history of science, we know how much the folly, caprice, passions, interests, and consequent prejudices of men, have retarded its advancement. In this case, too, there was no natural opposition in the human heart. How much more, then, must these causes operate against moral and religious truth, to which all experience, and the uniform testimony of the Word of God, declare that the heart of man is deeply opposed? It appears to me, that it is from ignorance or forgetfulness of this fact, or principle of our sinful nature, that the maxim with which these observations commence has been so often brought forward, both by statesmen and divines, as a reason for putting truth

an error on an equal footing, and extending alike to both, or withholding alike from both, any support or encouragement. Now, this seeming reason appears to me to be founded entirely in a fallacy. The native excellence of truth no one will dispute. But, like the gold in the mine, unless it be wisely applied and regulated, through the proper instrumentality and aid of man, it is altogether useless and inefficient. A law may be ever so excellent, but, as Paley observes, "a law is nothing, and can do nothing of itself." So it is with truth. Leave it to itself—leave it merely in the pages of the Bible, and it will be of no more avail than the gold in the mine. The Christian doctrine of the agency of the Holy Spirit alters not the case in the least. He operates by means. This is beautifully illustrated, as I have elsewhere remarked,* in Zechariah, chapter iv. While it is there declared, that it is not "by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts;" that it was not by the might of Persia, nor the authority of its kings, nor by his own skill, that Zerubbabel was to rear the temple; yet, by the Spirit of God disposing them to favour his design, and by His working with him, was the mountain of difficulties to become a plain before Zerubbabel, and he was to put the head-stone on the temple, with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it," even when he acted "as Cyrus the king of Persia had commanded them." †

* See "Remarks," &c. Second Edition.

† Ezra iv. 3. See Scott on Zech. iv.

Unless people, priest, prophet, and governor, had united, "according to the commandment of the God of Israel," and, (no inconsistency between them,) "according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia,"* "this house of God" could not have been builded, through the opposition of "the people of the land." This opposition has exterminated Protestantism,† and even Christianity, in various countries. The question, then, simply comes to be, What is the most efficient way of giving the truth, like the gold, useless of itself, proper circulation? The answer to this question is given, primarily, in the whole external institutions of religion—the written Word, the Sabbath, ordinances, a standing ministry, and such like. It is given, secondarily, in the obvious truth, that these can be most efficiently upheld in any country, through the national influence acting through its organ—the civil government. "Of God, through God, and *to* God, are *all* things." In these "all things," reason would, in the first instance, pronounce the office of government to be included; and there is nothing in the whole compass of revelation that even hints at any other notion. "Of God" are the powers that be; and in no way does it seem that the authority and influence derived from God can so well and effectually tend again "*to* God," as in diffusing and upholding the truth as it is in Jesus. If a principle, so apparently obvious, be wrong, we

* Ezra vi. 14.

† See M'Crie's History of the Reformation in Spain and Italy.

should expect it to be clearly declared. Is it so declared in the Word of God? We think not; but the reverse. The text, "My kingdom is not of this world," has no reference whatever to the question.* Has it been proved wrong by its effects in the history of the Church of Christ? We think not. Yet this has been confidently asserted. Particularly, has it been maintained that the effects proceeding from what has been called the Establishment of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine, about the beginning of the fourth century, as compared with its previous state of purity and efficiency, are entire proof that civil, in other words, national aid, in upholding and promoting the gospel is pernicious and unlawful. How far, then, does the testimony of history justify this conclusion?

This inquiry I shall pursue under the divisions naturally suggested by the order of time; namely—

I. The corruptions of the Church during the first century.

II. The corruptions of the Church during the second century.

III. The corruptions of the Church during the third century.

IV. What Constantine, and succeeding Roman Emperors, actually did in reference to a Civil Endowment of the Church, together with a view of some of the general causes that operated to promote its degeneracy, and to exalt its unlawful power.

* See Willis' excellent Discourse on Civil Establishments of Christianity. Inglis' Vindication, &c.

Before proceeding directly to the illustration of these inquiries, it is proper to determine the weight of the charges brought against Establishments, from the corruptions introduced by Constantine, as compared with preceding times. There is possibly some variety of opinion on this point among the opponents of Establishments—a variety occasioned by the comparative ignorance or information of the parties. But, whatever be their relative opinions of the state of Christianity in the first three centuries, they all, with one voice, speak of it as such that it affords positive proof of such a total, sudden, pernicious, and universal depravation, on the accession of Constantine, as to furnish a complete argument against a National Church.

I have no wish to take advantage of the rash and ill-informed statements of persons who have got hold of this idea, and take it for granted, from the frequency with which it has been repeated; and, in order to come at the opinions of those from whom I differ on this point, I shall quote a few sentences from the sermon of Dr Wardlaw, recently published, considering him as the best specimen of his heterogeneous party; and then I shall try their soundness by the test of history, sacred and profane:—

"During the first three centuries," says he, "as every one knows, Christianity was not only unsupported by any of the civil powers of the world—it had to struggle, with hardly any intermission, against their determined and ferocious opposition. Instead of any secular temptations then existing to the profession of it, the very profession, from

the circumstances in which it was made, was a satisfactory pledge of sincerity. Yet, during that period, when left to its own native energies and 'self-recommending excellence,' to the zeal of those devoted friends who 'loved not their lives unto the death,' and to the accompanying agency of the Divine Spirit, the conquests of the truth were wide and wonderful. In this its early history, therefore, we have surely a fair specimen of what it might have continued to do, had it been allowed thus to go forward on its own resources."*

I quote this passage to show, first, that by the "primitive churches," is to be understood the churches during the first three centuries; in short, up to the time that Christianity was declared the religion of the empire. It is necessary to remark this to prevent ambiguity; because, in a subsequent passage this writer says—"The whole history" (that is, on the Establishment, as it is called, of Christianity) "is changed. Contrast the book of the Acts of the Apostles with the narrative of times succeeding the Establishment of Christianity. The latter are the records [is the record?] of a worldly kingdom, proceeding on worldly principles, and promoting its interests by worldly means."† The contrast here is put either very inconsiderately, or very unfairly. If the contrast is to be thus limited, and the space between the time of the apostles and Constantine passed over, the contrast will certainly be very advantageous for our author's premises,

* Wardlaw's Sermon on Civil Establishments of Christianity, p. 34.
† Ibid. p. 39.

but will be of no use to his argument against Establishments; because, under the apostles, at least, it was the age of miraculous power and special outpouring of the Holy Ghost. It must be understood, therefore, that the expression, "primitive churches," refers to the first three centuries.

I quote the above passage to show, in the second place, that this writer esteems the whole period, down to the time of Constantine, "a fair specimen" of Christianity, and totally and diametrically at variance with that which succeeded it.

"The avowal of faith in Christ," he goes on, "had previously been the way to proscription, imprisonment, and the cruelest forms of death: it now became the path to preferment and honour—the necessary qualification for imperial favour, and for the secular dignities and emoluments that waited on its smile." "There was a bribe held out to enter the Church." "It is needless to say what was the *immediate* and deplorable effect of this change. It was like opening a flood-gate, that had kept back the tide of corruption, and giving it a free influx; so that hypocrisy and worldliness entered in full inundation."

From this quotation we naturally infer, that, previously to the time of Constantine, Christians generally were neither hypocritical, worldly, nor corrupt, to any great degree; but, at this time, and in consequence of the accident of their religion becoming that of the empire, suddenly became so to an overwhelming extent.

"Before that time," our author adds, "the zeal

of individuals and of churches, was lively, active, and efficacious. Christians felt that all depended upon it. Each church was a missionary society." By a church, be it observed, Dr Wardlaw must mean a congregation; and the inference is, that Christianity was propagated by individual or congregational effort, without the aid of a combined society. (We shall see, in course, how far this inference is just.) Any combined influence, by synods, would have assimilated it to the devices of human government. This is Independency, and what may be fitly called Voluntary Presbyterianism.

"And in the internal discipline of the now misnamed Church of Christ, oh, what a revolution!"—"The hindrance to the development of this anomalous power (the man of sin), this strange and wicked mystery, was 'taken out of the way' when the emperor and empire of Rome ceased to be Pagan, and became (in the language of courtesy) Christian. It was then that every barrier to the progress of corruption was thrown down; and by its gradual, or rather rapid and accelerating increase, the Antichristian Pope succeeded to the Christian Emperor; and thus, from an event which has too often been boasted of as one of the most splendid triumphs of Christianity, and most signal manifestations of divine favour to the Church, were introduced the terrors of papal tyranny, and all the ignorance and superstition, the degradation, and misery, and thraldom, of the dark ages." *

* Wardlaw's Sermon on Civil Establishments of Christianity, pp. 36, 37, 39, 41.

I beg my readers to observe carefully how much is charged, in the last part of the above quotation, on Constantine's conversion. We shall try its justice by the test of history.

From these several quotations, it is not making the opinions of the opponents of Establishments answerable for more than they ought to be charged with, if I should say, that they affirm that all the grossest corruptions in doctrine, practice, and government of the Christian Church, and especially of the Church of Rome, together with all the ignorance, oppression, and misery of the dark ages, are chargeable upon Constantine's Establishment.* To those who know anything of civil or ecclesiastical history, this will appear a violently extravagant charge.—It is so made, however.

I beg here to make one other preliminary remark, and it is this, that though all that is here charged upon Constantine's Establishment were true, and not, as it is in reality, grossly exaggerated and unfounded, it would not affect the question of Establishments in the remotest degree, while we have the example of the Scottish Establishment, existing for nearly three hundred years, with its doctrine and practice as pure as those of any body of the same extent and duration that ever existed on earth, and its machinery for reaching and affecting the national mind altogether unequalled

* Though I do not admit that there was a regular Establishment under Constantine, I shall use the above phrase to prevent circumlocution.

—and none of whose principles can be shown to have any such tendencies.

I now proceed to show that very gross corruptions defaced the Church, both in doctrine, practice, and government, during the first three centuries. In doing this, it will not be necessary to trace the progress of these corruptions in a regular historical narration of cause and effect, from the time of the apostles down to the first Christian Emperor. It will be sufficient to give such notices as may tend to show that such corruptions existed, and that they are traceable to human nature and general circumstances, and not to the blandishments of civil favour.

CHAPTER I.

The Corruptions of the Church during the First Century.

OUR Saviour declared that it "must needs be that offences come." Even among His apostles there were manifested those elements of ambition and jealousy inherent in the human heart, that on every occasion are ready to engender strifes and divisions. It required the presence, and authority, and gradual teaching of the Saviour, and of the Holy Spirit, to moderate and suppress them. This

we see in the case of the mother of Zebedee's children, whose ignorant request that her two sons might be raised to especial honour in the Messiah's anticipated temporal kingdom, raised such a spirit in the breasts of the other apostles, that it is said, "And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren." *

Heresies and errors sprung up and flourished so early as the times of the apostles. The Gospel of John, it is allowed by many, and some of these the best, commentators, was written to oppose and counteract the opinions of "certain heretics of those early days; some of whom denied our Lord's real Deity, and others His real humanity." † But without entering into the much-agitated controversy against what particular sects John wrote his Gospel, or if he wrote it expressly against any, it cannot be doubted that errors of a very pernicious kind sprung up in the first age of the Christian Church. One of the earliest errors in doctrine was in reference to the matter of a sinner's justification before God. It originated with some Christian Jews, who endeavoured to establish the necessity of circumcision and obedience to the ceremonial law of Moses, in order to justification. "This was the first time," says Milner, "that the natural pride and ignorance of the human heart, disguised under the pretence of religious zeal, attempted to undermine the simplicity of the faith." A council of the apostles ‡ was held to determine this controversy; and regarding it Milner farther remarks,

* Matt. xx. 24. † Scott. ‡ Acts xv.xiv.

"It is to be feared that the Church of Jerusalem received not all the benefit which was to be wished from the wisdom and charity of the council."* Accordingly, we find several of the epistles of St Paul directed against this fatal error. And, on the other hand, we find him arguing strenuously against another error of an opposite kind, but originating in the same corruption of the human heart, and its ignorance of the absolute holiness of God and spirituality of His law; namely, that which maintained that a believer might "sin because grace doth abound." To oppose this monstrous doctrine, so contrary to the whole spirit of revealed religion, in its doctrines, precepts, and dispensations, James expressly wrote his epistle. Indeed, these two pernicious errors, so natural to the human heart, along with the spirit of ambition so early manifested, are the leading principles and main foundation of many succeeding corruptions. And hence Paul says, "For the mystery of iniquity" (the Papacy) "doth already work." † We find John ‡ speaking of the Nicolaitanes; a sect whom Scott characterises as "avowed and most abominable Antinomians." Peter makes mention of heretics of the same description, who yet are said to "have known the way of righteousness;"§ that is, of course, speculatively or professedly. Jude speaks of the same persons in terms of the strongest condemnation. These two apostles farther speak of persons who were guilty

* Eccl. Hist. vol. i. pp. 26–29.
† 2 Thess. ii. 7.
‡ Rev. ii. 6, 15.
§ 2 Peter ii. 15, 16, 21.

of even "denying the Lord that bought them—and through covetousness, shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." It is true that this language of St Peter being future, a caviller might remove this severe censure to a more distant period of the Church; but this cannot be done with the collateral words of Jude, who says, "For there *are* certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." *

As it has been supposed that John wrote his Gospel expressly with a view to the heresy, already existing, that denied the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, so it is certain that he makes express mention of its existence in his first epistle. Thus, ii. 18, 19—"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us:"—Compared with verse 22. "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." Light will be thrown on this verse, by comparing it with iv. 3. "And every spirit that confesseth not that

* Jude 4.

Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." These passages are very instructive. While they teach us that there were then, and may be at all times, many forms of antichrist, it had especially appeared, not merely indirectly, but in a plain and naked denial both of the Divinity and humanity of the Saviour. And, as if by anticipation of some who strangely reply—against those who adduce the heresies of the primitive churches as proof that they did not owe their origin to Establishments—that the persons who maintained them "were not Christians at all;" that is, not even in name—for, of course, they could be so in no other way,—the Spirit declares, "*They went out from us*, but they were not of us." It is delightful to observe with what wonderful foresight the Spirit of God has provided us in the Scriptures themselves with the means of reply to all the various shades of error that successively arise. While human nature is everywhere, and at all times, the same, we must expect the same effects. But heresies and vices, or rather persons exhibiting them, seem to have been permitted to enter the Church of Christ, even in the apostles' days, that the Spirit of God might furnish us with instructions suited to the successive emergencies that might arise in its after history.

In examining this scriptural evidence to the irregularities in practice, and the errors in doctrine,

exhibited by the apostolic churches, John Newton declares, in a work that has come into my hands while this Essay is passing through the press:—"However paradoxical it may seem, we hope, in a proper place, to show, that no new opinion, right or wrong, respecting the faith in Christ, has been started since the close of the scriptural canon."* This he does very satisfactorily, and in his usual very characteristic and interesting manner.

After a review of the history of the church of Jerusalem at this period, Milner, giving the decision of a historian subject to the scrutiny of after ages, draws the following conclusion:—"It appears how naturally the human heart departs from the faith of Christ before it is aware. The penetrating and zealous spirit of Paul was employed by the Divine goodness to uphold still the standard of truth. Many, no doubt, received benefit from his example; *but the glory of this church was now on the decline.*" † But this declension was not confined to them. It is evinced by the letters addressed by John, at the dictation of the Head of the Church, to the seven churches of Asia, in which are such passages as these:—To the church of Ephesus, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." ‡ To the church of Pergamos, "But I have a few things against thee, because

* Review of Eccl. Hist. Works, in 4 vols., vol. ii. p. 248.

† Milner, vol. i. cent. i. pp. 32, 33. ‡ Rev. ii. 4, 5.

thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate." To the Church in Thyatira, "Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not." To the church of Sardis, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." And farther, "Thou hast *a few names* even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments," implying that it was not so with the great majority. Of Laodicea, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."* Scott, giving the judgment of an impartial commentator, without any view to a particular opinion, uses the following strong language:—"The ambition and avarice of some who preached the gospel and exercised spiritual gifts from corrupt motives, who opposed the apostles in order to obtain authority, influence, and secular advantage, or who perverted the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, introducing false and selfish confidences, supersti-

* Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20; iii. 1, 15, 16.

tions, will-worship, self-imposed austerities, and the worship of angels, and the disposition of many professed Christians to follow their pernicious ways —were as a corrupt leaven, which, working secretly, would at length produce this great apostacy." * Doddridge, an Independent, who cannot therefore be suspected of Church leanings, says, in a note on the place, "But it appears much more reasonable to understand the passage before us of the *anti-christian spirit*, which began to work in the Christian Church then, in the pride and ambition of some ministers, the factious temper of many Christians, the corruption of many Christian doctrines, the imposing unauthorised ceremonies, the worship of angels, &c., *of all which things the Papacy availed itself, for acquiring and exercising its iniquitous dominion.*" Here, at least, Establishments had nothing to do in it. What effect the existence or removal of the Pagan power had in retarding or accelerating the progress of the Papacy, and how far Voluntary churches can consistently look to such an agent to oppose corruption, though civil power must not interfere to aid the gospel, will be noticed when we come down to the period of Constantine.

From the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in the case of the incestuous person of whom Paul writes, where he reproves that church so severely for their levity and boasting in tolerating in their communion a person of such opprobrious conduct, such as

* Scott on 2 Thess. ii. 6, 7.

was hardly to be heard of among the heathens themselves—and from the same epistle, in the institution of the Lord's Supper, where he alludes to the disgraceful abuses attending the celebration of that ordinance, in eating and drinking to excess, as at the Pagan religious feasts—we have farther proofs of the unhappy tendencies of human nature to rapid and constant corruption; and instead of referring the cause to this or that church, we are ceaselessly forced to lament the perverse degeneracy of mankind, who seem to rush to folly and iniquity "as the horse rusheth to the battle." John Newton remarks on these enormities, "I apprehend that these instances of disorder cannot be paralleled by the most irregular proceedings in our time, amongst any people that hold the principles which I am at present engaged to vindicate." * Milner, who writes professedly not to detail the faults, but the excellencies of Christians, says, "We are astonished to find, in reviewing them (the epistles to the Corinthians), how faulty many persons of this church were; and the scene which they exhibit more resembles modern than primitive times, in a variety of circumstances." †

A philosophising spirit, or a disposition to mingle the fables of the oriental philosophy with Christianity, already began to manifest itself; and we find Paul, the zealous and watchful apostle, who had "daily upon him the care of all the churches,"

* Review of Eccl. Hist. book ii. ch. iii. vol. ii. p. 318.

† Milner, vol. i. p. 75.

warning the young ministers and people of the Lord against it, and characterising it, in several epistles, by such terms as these, "vain words," "enticing words," "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." "Neither give heed to fables, and endless genealogies,"—"avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing, have erred concerning the faith."* Such things, it is evident from these words, had *already* existed. Moreover, in the same chapter (1 Tim. vi. 4, 5) we read, not only of such foolish questions, but of "envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing *that gain is godliness.*" That all this existed then, is evident from the exhortation to Timothy, "From such withdraw thyself:" so that gain was early put for godliness even before the existence of endowments. Paul, writing to the Philippians regarding Timothy, says, "For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state: *for all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's.*"

Mosheim, reviewing the character and principles of the Christians of the first century, and even of the times of the apostles, draws them as follows. And first as to character:—

"The lives and manners of the Christians in this century are highly celebrated by most authors,

* Eph. v. 6; Col. ii. 4, 8; 1 Tim. i. 4; vi. 20, 21.

and recommended to succeeding generations as unspotted models of piety and virtue; and if these encomiums be confined to the greatest part of those who embraced Christianity in the *infancy* of the Church, they are certainly distributed with justice. But many run into extremes upon this head; and estimating the lives and manners of all by the illustrious examples of some eminent saints, or the sublime precepts and exhortations of certain pious doctors, fondly imagine that every appearance of vice and disorder was banished from the first Christian societies. The greatest of those authors who have written concerning the innocence and sanctity of the primitive Christians, have fallen into this agreeable error; *and a gross error indeed it is, as the strongest testimonies too evidently prove.*"*

With regard to the corruptions of doctrine, of which we have had proof enough from the apostolical writings themselves, the same historian says—"The Christian Church was scarcely formed, when, in different places, there started up certain pretended reformers, who, not satisfied with the simplicity of that religion which was taught by the apostles, meditated changes of doctrine and worship and set up a new religion, drawn from their own licentious imaginations. This we learn from the writings of the apostles, and particularly from the epistles of St Paul, where we find that some were for forcing the doctrines of Christianity into a con-

* Mosh. cent. i. part ii. ch. iii. sect. ix.

formity with the philosophical systems they had adopted,* while others were as studious to blend with these doctrines the opinions and traditions of the Jews. Several of these are mentioned by the apostles; such as Hymenæus, Alexander, Philetus, Hermogenes, Demas, and Diotrephes: though the four last are rather to be understood as apostates from the truth than as corrupters of it." †

"The influence of these new teachers was but inconsiderable at first. During the lives of the apostles, their attempts towards the perversion of Christianity were attended with little success, and the number of their followers was exceedingly small. They, however, acquired credit and strength by degrees; and even from the first dawn of the gospel, laid, imperceptibly, the foundations of those sects, whose animosities and disputes produced afterwards such trouble and perplexity in the Christian Church. The true state of these divisions is more involved in darkness than any other part of ecclesiastical history." · · · "Of one thing indeed," he continues, "we are certain, and that is, that the most of these doctrines were chimerical and extravagant in the highest degree; and so far from containing anything that could recommend them to a lover of truth, that they rather deserve to occupy a place in the history of human delusion and folly."‡ He then gives an account of the

* 1 Tim. vi. 20; 1 Tim. i. 3, 4; Tit. iii. 9; Col. ii. 8.

† 2 Tim. ii. 18, and other places.

‡ Mosheim, cent. i. part ii. chap. v. sect. i. ii.

doctrines of the Gnostics, and the numerous disputes and divisions introduced by them, even then, into the Christian Church.

Formey, after giving a favourable picture of the primitive church in the first century, writes, "Notwithstanding the field of the Lord was thus happily cultivated, the enemy of man's salvation found means to spread in it the seeds of error. Attacked from without by violent persecutions, of which we shall hereafter speak, the Christian Church was not free, even within itself, from false preachers, who propagated dangerous heresies, and caused fatal divisions." After giving the scriptural evidence already adduced, he proceeds to give an account of the numerous and pernicious heresies and heretics of that early period: "In the Revelation mention is made of other heretics, whom the sacred author speaks of under the mysterious names of Bileamites and Nicolaites, who perverted all kind of morality by allowing too much indulgence in pleasure, and all the disorderly lusts of the flesh."*

Brown of Haddington, writing of the apostolic times, says—"It must, however, be acknowledged, that even in this age there were disorderly walkers in Corinth, Philippi, the Asian Churches, and no doubt elsewhere, who were a scandal to the Christian name." "Contentions and errors already took place."—These are enumerated. He supposes the Gnostics to be alluded to by Paul, when he speaks of a "Gnosis," or science falsely so called; and after

* Formey's Eccl. Hist. cent. i. p. 19.

noticing some of their absurd blasphemies, he adds, "While most of these Gnostics adopted the rules of austere mortification of their body, as the natural enemy of their soul, and in order to purify and enlarge their mind, others pretended there was no moral difference *in bodily actions, and so abandoned themselves to every sensual gratification of lust.*"* The Gnostics are the same sect as the Docetæ; of whom, with the Ebionites, Milner says, "The doctrine of the atonement was opposed by both;—by the Docetæ, in their denial of the real human nature of Jesus; and by the Ebionites in their denial of the Divine nature, which stamps an infinite value on His sufferings."†

It is difficult to believe that these things are related of times that may with the strictest propriety be called apostolical. Nor can we avoid thus early anticipating the conclusion, that if such corruptions prevailed, and to such extent, so very early, the corruptions of the period nearly 300 years later, were not more than was to be expected from the gradual working of the causes of deterioration, in the course of the duration, and extension of the numbers, of the Christian Church, combined with the general disorders of the Roman Empire. A history of the Church of Scotland since the period of its first establishment, would certainly not be in terms more unfavourable to an Establishment than are employed by the above historians respecting the first century of the Christian Church. It would

* Brown's Gen. Hist. of the Christian Church, cent. i. sect. iv.

† Milner, vol. i. cent. i. p. 136.

not be more unreasonable, from the above testimonies to the corruption of these early times in doctrine and in practice, to reason against Christianity, than against the civil establishment of it from the corruptions of succeeding times. They are an argument neither against the one nor the other. They teach us the strength of human folly, weakness, passion, and selfishness, which Christianity, compared with Paganism, has done wonders to overcome—but which are still so overpowering and overwhelming, as to make the expectation of perfection in the Church of Christ chimerical and visionary, while men are in their present condition—till, indeed, the "Spirit be poured out upon us from on high," in some more signal manner than has ever yet been done.

If so great corruptions took place under the instruction of the apostles themselves, in the age of miracles, and under the uncommon outpourings of the Spirit of God, before the ardour of a "first love" could be cold, and the devotedness of first attachment had much time to be shaken—under the scourge of persecution, while the sword of death was suspended every moment over their heads, and nearly three hundred years before the working of an Establishment could even be imagined to have any effect—is it not very great perversion, or very great ignorance, of scriptural and historical testimony, to trace all the corruptions that accumulated through the progressive darkness and successive revolutions of a thousand years, to the principle of an Established Church?

CHAPTER II.

The Corruptions of the Church during the Second Century.

I SHALL now proceed to examine the testimony of history in regard to the second century of the Christian Church: and we shall find the seeds of corruption in doctrine, government, and practice, already sown and sprung up, advancing and ripening apace. The principal corruptions of doctrine seem to have originated in the impure mixture of human philosophy with the gospel, produced by the accession of philosophers and learned men to the Christian cause. From this source originated many errors—especially from the doctrines of what was called modern Platonism; being an amalgamation of, or selection from, the numerous opinions of philosophers then prevailing. An attempt was made by the extraordinary inventions of Ammonius of Alexandria, to reconcile "this monstrous coalition of heterogeneous doctrines"* with the Christian religion. "This new species of philosophy, imprudently adopted by Origen and many other Christians, was extremely prejudicial to the cause of the gospel, and to the beautiful simplicity of its celestial doctrines. For hence it was that the Christian doctors began to introduce their subtle and obscure erudition into the religion of Jesus; to involve in

* Mosheim.

the darkness of a vain philosophy some of the principal truths of Christianity, that had been revealed with the utmost plainness, and were indeed obvious to the meanest capacity; and to *add to the divine precepts of our Lord many of their own*, which had no sort of foundation in any part of the sacred writings. From the same source arose . . . the Mystics. . . . Nor did the evils which sprung from this Ammonian philosophy end here. For, under the specious pretext of the necessity of contemplation, it gave occasion to that slothful and indolent course of life which continues to be led by myriads of monks retired in cells, and sequestered from society, to which they are neither useful by their instructions, nor by their examples. To this philosophy we may trace, as to their source, a multitude of vain and foolish ceremonies, proper only to cast a veil over truth, and to nourish superstition, and which are, for the most part, religiously observed by many, even in the times in which we live. It would be endless to enumerate all the pernicious consequences that may be justly attributed to this new philosophy, or rather to this monstrous attempt to reconcile falsehood with truth, and light with darkness. Some of its most fatal effects were, its alienating the minds of many, in the following ages, from the Christian religion; and its substituting, in the place of the pure and sublime simplicity of the gospel, an unseemly mixture of Platonism and Christianity."* There were two parties in the Church at this time—one the advocates, and

* Mosheim, cent. ii. part ii. chap. i. sect. xii.

the other the opponents, of human wisdom and learning. "Hence," continues the historian, "the early beginnings of that unhappy contest between faith and reason, religion and philosophy, piety and genius, which increased in the succeeding ages, and is prolonged, even to our times, with a violence that renders it extremely difficult to be brought to a conclusion." Milner calls Ammonius a "Pagan Christian."*

I shall not here enter into any minute account of the heresies prevailing in this century, but content myself with one or two extracts, that may give a general notion of their character and extent. For this purpose, I cannot do better than quote the following from Milner:—"Let it be remarked, in general, that the same opposition to the Deity of Christ, or His manhood, and the same insidious methods of depreciating or abusing the doctrines of grace, continued in the second century, which had begun in the first, with this difference, that they were now *multiplied, varied, complicated, and refined, by endless subtleties and fancies*, in which the poverty of taste and genius, so common in a period when letters are declining, discovers itself no less than the Christian doctrine."† Other historians, without any exception, give the same according testimony. The doctrine of purgatory and prayer for the dead sprung out of this mixture of human philosophy with the gospel. "This (namely,

* Milner's Eccl. Hist. cent. ii. p. 263.
† Ibid. cent. ii. ch. ix. p. 255.

Plato's notion that only the souls of heroes and eminent persons ascend directly to the mansions of bliss) the Platonic Christians improved as a commentary upon the declarations of Christ, and imagined that only the souls of the martyrs ascended directly to heaven, while the rest were shut up in some obscure place till Christ's second coming, or at least till they should be sufficiently purified from sin; and hence they reckoned prayer for them useful, if not necessary. This notion, further enlarged by men's carnal fancy, became a fertile source of unspeakable error and superstition."*

The same historian (Brown) concludes his account of these heresies thus—"From a review of the above-mentioned heresies and errors, it is evident, that though the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scripture, of the Trinity, of the person, natures, and satisfaction of Christ, of justification by His imputed righteousness, and regeneration and sanctification by His indwelling Spirit, and of the nature of the sacraments, was still retained by the great body of Christians, *yet scarce one article of religion was left uncorrupted by some one or other of the sects.* While among the Gnostics, the wine in the Lord's Supper was thought to be turned into Christ's real blood, and the bread was mixed with the blood of infants; and the images of Christ, said to be drawn by Pilate, and of His apostles and others, were worshipped,—the Montanists rebaptized such as joined their society, and it is even

* Brown's History, cent. ii. sect. ii.

said, baptized the dead, or some representatives in their room.*

In this century, the government of the Church, and the character of its rulers, underwent a manifest change. Mosheim, giving an account of the rise of ecclesiastical councils, and tracing their origin from the Greeks, says—" But these ecclesiastical councils were not long confined to the Greeks: their great utility was no sooner perceived, than they became universal, and were formed in all places where the gospel had been planted. . . . These councils, of which we find not the smallest trace" [of course we must except the case mentioned in the Scriptures, see Acts xv. xvi.] "before the middle of this century, changed the whole face of the Church, and gave it a new form; for by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished, and the power and authority of the bishops greatly augmented. The humility, indeed, and prudence of these pious prelates prevented their assuming all at once the power with which they were afterwards invested. At their first appearance in these general councils, they acknowledged that they were no more than the delegates of their respective churches, and that they acted in the name, and by the appointment, of their people. But they changed this humble tone, imperceptibly extended the limits of their authority, turned their influence into dominion, &c."—From the necessity of a president in these assemblies arose the office of Metropolitan.

* Brown's History, cent. ii. sect. iv.

"In the meantime the bounds of the Church were enlarged; the custom of holding councils was followed wherever the sound of the gospel had reached; and the universal Church had now the appearance of one vast republic, formed by a combination of a great number of little states." This is somewhat different from the assertion of Dr Wardlaw, that "each church, or congregation, was a missionary society;" feeling as if all depended on it. Hence arose the Patriarchs, "whose office it was to preserve the consistence and union of that immense body, whose members were so widely dispersed throughout the nations." Among these Patriarchs, "at length, ambition being arrived at its most insolent period, formed a new dignity, investing the Bishop of Rome, and his successors, with the *title and authority of Prince of the Patriarchs.**

"In the government, discipline, and worship of the Church, and in the personal conduct of Christians, there was a remarkable decline to the worse. After the second overthrow of the Jewish nation, by Adrian, about A.D. 134 (two hundred years, be it observed, before Christianity was declared the religion of the empire), too many of the rulers of the Christian Church, ambitious of dignity and wealth, gave out that they succeeded to the dignities of the Jewish priesthood, now quite abolished—the bishops to the high priest—the presbyters to the priests—and the deacons to the Levites; and sometimes ascribed the Jewish names to these re-

* Mosheim, cent. ii. part ii. chap. ii. sects. ii. iii.

spective offices. However undesigned this might be at first, it gradually operated towards the establishment of the Papal power over the Christian Church."—"The Church rulers, in order to please their new converts (Jews and heathens), and to remove the prejudices of their carnal opposers, became zealous of adopting into the Christian worship as many of the Jewish and heathen ceremonies as the times could bear. In correspondence to the revellings at the heathen festivals, the Christians began to dance and practise other forms of merriment in their assemblies at the martyrs' tombs. Like the heathens they affected to call things mysteries," * &c. About the middle of the second century arose the quarrel about the proper day for the celebration of Easter—a "pitiful difference," which, in the language of Brown, "inflamed the whole Christian Church," and of Formey, "rent it in pieces by divisions." Even now the Bishop of Rome was arrogantly laying claim to despotic power, though it was long resisted. "Victor of Rome, towards the end of the century, after advising with some other bishops, wrote an imperious letter to the Asian Christians, charging them to observe their Easter festival on the same day with their brethren in the west. Polycrates of Ephesus answered Victor's lordly summons in the manner it deserved, and declared that the Asians were determined to adhere to their own custom. Quite infuriated with rage, Victor excommunicated them all from all

* Brown's History, cent. ii. sect. iii.

fellowship with the Church of Rome, and declared them unworthy of the character of brethren. The rest of the western churches refused to approve this mad curse." *

The same writer relates the corruptions in the rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper; such as anointing with oil, using the sign of the cross, sending the sacrament to the sick, and such like. He then goes on:—"The irregularities of Church members having become more common, their spiritual rulers rendered their discipline the more severe; and for that purpose, not to their honour or the honour of Jesus, adopted into it a *multitude* of heathen rites.† Such as fell into murder, idolatry, or adultery, were laid under a sentence of excommunication, delivering them over to Satan; from which, in some places, they were loosed, and in others, not till after a long and painful course of discipline. The intercessory letters of noted confessors, or of persons appointed to martyrdom, often procured an indulgence for scandalous persons, which consisted merely in an abatement of some part of their ecclesiastical penance. *On this foundation, the Papal pretences to remit the proper guilt of sin, and free from divine punishments were afterwards built.*" ‡

* Brown's History, cent. ii. sect. iii.

† See this subject curiously illustrated in Middleton's Letter from Rome.—The writer of this essay has witnessed many of the heathen rites mentioned by Middleton—"Riti dei misteriosi tempi," as an Italian Abbaté once sneeringly expressed it to him.

‡ Brown, cent. ii. sect. iii.

After relating the heresies of the second century, Formey observes, "We cannot help being surprised that so near the beginning of Christianity and the preaching of the apostles, there could arise so many monstrous errors: but alas! to what wanderings is not the human mind subject, when it is no longer guided by the Word of God, but is entirely given up to the sallies of a heated imagination!" *

Milner, in closing the view of the second century, uses the following language, which, after what has been adduced, may be considered moderate. "And here we close the view of the second century; which, for the most part, exhibited proofs of divine grace as strong, or nearly so, as the first. We have seen the same unshaken and simple faith of Jesus, the same love of God and of the brethren; and that in which they singularly excelled modern Christians, the same heavenly spirit and victory over the world. But a dark shade is enveloping these divine glories. The Spirit of God is grieved already by the ambitious intrusions of self-righteousness, argumentative refinements, and Pharisaic pride; and though it be more common to represent the *most sensible* decay of godliness as commencing a century later, to me it seems already begun." †

How unlike are these testimonies and reflections of grave historians, to the declamations of party writers, who date the main corruptions of Christianity nearly two hundred years later!

* Formey, Eccl. Hist. cent. ii. vol. i. p. 49.
† Milner, vol. i. pp. 267, 268.

Already in the beginning, and during the course of the second century, do we find every corruption of doctrine, practice, and government, pushing forward with bold front and rapid pace—and to an extent that cannot be affirmed of the Established Church of Scotland during nearly the last three hundred years. In the first two centuries, especially in the second, we have seen the existence and even prevalence of those doctrines and practices which had arrived at their maturity, by not more than their natural progress, during the ages of Popish darkness, from the sixth to the sixteenth century. We have even the worship of angels, of the images of Christ, and of the apostles, the reverence of the martyrs, the institution of the monks, the doctrines of purgatory, extreme unction, transubstantiation, and of human merit, the ambition and worldliness of the clergy, especially of the Romish bishop, fully developed—and though strenuously resisted by the truly righteous, yet gaining rapid and increasing strength, and bearing down all restraints. Notwithstanding all the declamation against Establishments, arising from the corruptions of the Church succeeding the time of the first Christian emperor, I think, after the evidence now brought forward, I am justified in affirming, that vastly greater corruptions of every kind prevailed in the Christian Church during the two first centuries, than have prevailed in the Reformed Church of Scotland during the nearly three hundred years of her existence.

CHAPTER III.

The Corruptions of the Church during the Third Century.

As we trace down the history of the third century we shall find this corruption gradually advancing, and breaking out on every occasion favourable to its development; all tending to convince us, that the general depravity of human nature, and human society, is quite enough to account for the abuses of Christianity, and the corruptions that have unhappily attended it, without seeking them in the principle of Establishments, which then had no existence.

It will not be necessary here to enter into any minute examination of the corruptions of doctrine that took place in this century. Generally speaking, they seem to have been of the same kind, and originating from the same causes, with some modifications, as in the preceding. There were the same use and mixture of the pagan philosophy. The sect of Ammonius prevailed, by the genius and labours of Plotinus. "The number of disciples that were formed in the school of Plotinus is almost beyond credibility." * "Upon this account," says Formey, † "the doctrines of Christ's divinity, and that of the Holy Spirit, were proposed and treated of, in a manner by no means

* Mosh. vol. i. cent. iii. part ii. ch. i. sect. iii.

† Eccl. Hist. cent. iii. p. 60.

exact, or agreeable to the analogy of faith. From hence arose numbers of heresies in this century." "Heresies and disputes still raged in the Church." * The principal of these we shall barely enumerate. The Gnostics and Montanists still maintained their ground. A new sect of them sprung up from Manes, which Brown characterizes as "abominable." He pretended to be the Comforter promised by Christ to His disciples—rejected the Old Testament, and much of the New, with other extravagances. The doctrine of the Trinity was also assailed, in various ways, by Noetus, Sabellius, and Paul of Samosata; "whose followers," according to Brown, "were numerous." †

"To these heresies were added many dreadful disputes, which caused much trouble in the Church. The schism of the Novatians was the principal." It took its rise from Novat and Novatian. "Both these heresiarchs were excommunicated at Rome, and formed separate assemblies; and laid it down for a fundamental tenet, that the Church of Christ ought to be pure, and free from every stain; and that the sinner who had once fallen into any offence could not again become a member of it, though they did not refuse him the hopes of eternal life. The sect of the Novatians had a great number of followers, and lasted for some centuries." ‡ In this century also, prevailed the allegorical interpretations of Origen, so hurtful to the purity of the gospel.

That the ignorance of the dark ages is not to be

* Brown, cent. iii. sect. iv. † Ibid.
‡ Formey, vol. i. pp. 63, 64.

traced, as Dr Wardlaw affirms so roundly, to the Establishment of Christianity, more than their perversions of doctrine, is evident from the testimony of history. Even now, with the decay of the empire, and the general confusion and degradation that ensued, learning was rapidly on the decline. "The arts and sciences, which had formerly languished, seemed now ready to expire. Longinus, the rhetorician, and Dion Cassius, the historian, with a few others, appeared the last of the Greeks to stem the prevalent torrent of ignorance and barbarism." * "Different reasons contributed to this decay of learning. Few of the emperors patronised the sciences, or encouraged, by the prospect of their favour and protection, that emulation which is the soul of the republic of letters. Besides, the civil wars that almost always distracted the empire were extremely unfavourable to the pursuit of science; and the perpetual incursions of the barbarous nations, interrupted that leisure and tranquillity which are so essential to the progress of learning and knowledge, and extinguished among a people, accustomed to nothing almost but the din of arms, all desire of literary acquisitions." † These barbarous irruptions could not but materially deteriorate the whole character of the Roman empire, and the Christian inhabitants must have shared the deteriorating influence. Indeed, so early as the time of Cicero, symptoms of literary decay must have attracted his notice, as we find him, in his "Second Book of Tusculan Questions,"

* Brown, cent. iii. sect. ii. † Mosh. cent. iii. part ii. ch. i. sect. i.

using the following language:—Atque oratorum quidem laus ita ducta ab humili, venit ad summum ut jam, quod natura fert in omnibus fere rebus, senescat, brevique tempore ad nihilum ventura videatur." This anticipation was speedily realised. The spirit cherished by the Republic had leisure to unfold itself during the Augustan age; but succeeding despotisms rapidly repressed and chilled the free spirit of letters. Declamation, pedantry, and bombast, the uniform precursors of literary decay, soon succeeded. And even by the end of the first, and middle of the second centuries, treatises were written to investigate the causes of the decline of learning. Wars, factions, divisions, and invasions, together with the introduction of barbarians into the Roman armies, and the removal of the seat of government to Constantinople, all contributed to hasten the reign of ignorance. "And, at length, the doom of letters was sealed by the suppression of the western empire; which transferred Italy to the domination of successive tribes of the northern barbarians." * But of this more hereafter.

In this century the Christians often enjoyed seasons of favour and repose from the emperors. And though they were often exposed to dreadful persecutions, and the effects were most pernicious to the purity and fidelity of Christians,† yet, "At

* Miller's Philosophy of Modern History, vol. iii. p. 196.

† It is a remarkable fact, that, in the beginning and middle of the third century, the wealth of the Church was one temptation to persecute it. After relating a remarkable instance of the large contributions given to the Church, even so early as the year 170 (to the amount, by one individual, of 500 drachmas of gold), Father Paul

the same time, it is certain that the rights and privileges of the Christians were multiplied in this century much more than many are apt to imagine. In the army, at court, and indeed in all the orders of the nation, there was a considerable number of Christians who lived entirely unmolested; and, what is still more, the profession of Christianity *was no obstacle to public preferment under most of the emperors that lived in this century.*" Under Caracalla, the infamous Heliogabalus—Alexander Severus, who, through the influence of his mother, favoured the Christians—Gordian—his successors the Philips, father and son, who are believed, on good authority, to have professed Christianity,—

says, "Afterwards, the vast increase of her wealth, from the year 220, began to be looked upon with an envious eye, even by the emperors themselves; and gave occasion to Decius, the emperor (his persecution began about the year 250), to seize the person of St Lawrence, a Roman deacon, in hopes to have made himself master of the immense treasure of the Church. . . . In effect most of the persecutions which it suffered from the death of the Emperor Commodus, arose from the same cause; for when the princes or their captains of the guards wanted money, they found no shorter expedient for raising it, than by seizing the estates of the Christian Church." * Some of the imperial officers seem to have understood the voluntary principle fully; to an extent that, I suspect, its modern advocates are scarcely prepared to admit. "St Prudentius introduceth an officer thus speaking to St Lawrence:—'Give to Cæsar what thou knowest to be his. I ask what is just; for, if I mistake not, thy God coins no money. In lib. de Coronis.'" † St Cyprian lamenting the corruption of this period, says, that on account of it, God permitted persecution: "It always having been the divine method to reform either by the gentle remedies of lawful magistrates, or, when the corruptions have spread too far, by the scourge of persecution."

* Father Paul's Treatise on Benefices, chap. iii. iv. † Ib. note.

the Christians enjoyed tranquillity and even favour. "With respect to Gallienus, and some other emperors of this century, if they did not professedly favour the progress of Christianity, yet neither did they oppress its followers, nor retard its advancement. This clemency and benevolence which the followers of Jesus experienced from great men, and especially from those of the imperial dignity, must be placed, without doubt, among those human means that contributed to multiply the number of Christians and to enlarge the bounds of the Church." *

With this testimony of history to the favour shown to Christians even thus early, we must receive with caution such statements as those of Dr Wardlaw, when he says—"The avowal of faith in Christ had previously" (that is, before the time of Constantine) "been the way to proscription, confiscation, imprisonment, and the cruelest forms of death, it now became the path to preferment and honour." It did so, because Christianity had gradually acquired the ascendancy, and could no longer be neglected. It was not the result of the sudden and momentary sunshine of imperial favour. There was, no doubt, an "expansion" of corruption, but not the origination of it, under Constantine. It was the natural result of the peace and prosperity of the Church, and altogether independent of the principle of an Establishment. Carlo Denina, the historian of the Revolutions of Italy, after showing how obstinately attached the citizens of

* Mosheim, cent. iii. part i. chap. i. sects. i.-iv.

Rome, nobility and people, were to their pagan superstitions, soothsayers, astrology, temples, and games, has these words :—" Che se nella pace che godè la Chiesa sotto i due Filippi, i Cristiani sierano tanto rimessi dal primiero fervore; e l'avarizia, la frode, l'incontinenza, la violenza già tanto di forza aveano guadagnato nel seno della Chiesa: quanto più sparsi e più communi doveano essere i vizi fra i fidelî, allorchè la religion Cristiana era divenuta la religione dominante e non pure con sicurtà, ma con isperanza di temporali vantaggi si professava la fede di Cristo? Allora rimescolatasi la santità della religione con le passioni inseparabili dall 'umanità, e a cui soggiace per l'ordinario il più gran numero de 'viventi, si venne assai frequentemente a professare la fede di Cristo, e praticar costumi pagani." *—" If in the peace which the Church enjoyed under the two Philips (A.D. 244–8), the Christians were so much relaxed from their first fervour; and *avarice, fraud, incontinence, violence,* had already gained so much strength in the bosom of the Church, how much more widely spread, and more common, must be the vices among the faithful, when the Christian religion had become the prevailing religion, and the faith of Christ was professed not only with security, but with the hope of temporal advantages?" In fact, the effects could not have been otherwise without a miracle in the common nature of things. But, to proceed with the tran-

* Delle Rivoluzione d'Italia di Carlo Denina, lib. iv. cap. ii.

slation of our quotation—"Then the sacredness of religion being mingled with the passions *inseparable from humanity*, and to which commonly the great majority of mortals are subject, Christians very frequently *professed the faith of Christ, and practised pagan manners.*"

Thus, corruption kept pace with ignorance and outward prosperity. "The practical observances of religion," says Brown, "were still upon the decline."*—"The face of things began now to change in the Christian Church. The ancient method of ecclesiastical government seemed, in general, still to subsist; while, at the same time, by imperceptible steps it varied from the primitive rule, and degenerated towards the form of a religious monarchy. For the bishops aspired to higher degrees of power and authority than they had formerly possessed; and not only violated the rights of the people, but also made gradual encroachments upon the privileges of the presbyters. And that they might cover these usurpations with an air of justice and an appearance of reason, they published new doctrines concerning the nature of the Church, and of the episcopal dignity, &c. This change in the form of ecclesiastical government, was soon followed by a train of vices, which dishonoured the character and authority of those to whom the administration of the Church was committed. For though several yet continued to exhibit to the world illustrious examples of primi-

* Cent. iii. sect. iii.

tive piety and Christian virtue, yet many were sunk in luxury and voluptuousness, puffed up with vanity, arrogance, and ambition, possessed with a spirit of contention and discord, and addicted to many other vices, that cast an undeserved reproach upon the holy religion of which they were the unworthy professors and ministers. This is testified in such an ample manner, by the repeated complaints of many of the most respectable writers of this age [Origen and Eusebius are referred to], that truth will not permit us to spread the veil, which we should otherwise be desirous to cast over such enormities among an order so sacred."*

One would hardly believe that the historian was treating of the period of which Dr Wardlaw says—"Instead of any secular temptations then existing to the profession of it, the very profession, from the circumstances in which it was made, was a satisfactory pledge of sincerity. In this its early history, therefore, we have surely a fair specimen of what it might have continued to do, had it been allowed thus to go forward on its own resources." Such sayings are altogether unaccountable in any man who really knows the history of the period. It has given a pretty "fair specimen," to show, that the Voluntary principle was altogether powerless to stem the tide of human folly and iniquity. It is truly difficult, with the knowledge of the real facts of the case before us, to refrain from making severe reflections, when men of religious character

* Mosheim, cent. iii. part ii. chap. ii. sect. iii. iv.

and respectable talents indulge in such speculations, on a deeply important subject, without any other show of evidence than popular declamation. The historian goes on—"The bishops assumed, in many places, a princely authority; particularly those who had the greatest number of churches under their inspection, and who presided over the most opulent assemblies. They appropriated to their evangelical function the splendid ensigns of temporal majesty. A throne, surrounded with ministers, exalted above his equals the servant of the meek and humble Jesus; and sumptuous garments dazzled the eyes and the minds of the multitude into an ignorant veneration for their arrogated authority. The example of the bishops was ambitiously imitated by the presbyters, who, neglecting the sacred duties of their station, abandoned themselves to the indolence and delicacy of an effeminate and luxurious life. The deacons, beholding the presbyters deserting thus their functions, boldly usurped their rights and privileges; and the effects of a corrupt ambition were spread through every rank of the sacred order."* To diminish the labours of the now indolent and ambitious deacons, various lesser orders of church officers were instituted.

At this time, from the foolish notions that prevailed among the people respecting the spiritual advantages of celibacy, they were desirous that

* Mosheim, cent. iii. part ii. chap. ii. sect. iv.

the clergy should abstain from marriage. To gratify the people in this, many of the sacred order fell into the indecent custom (which modesty forbids to describe in the words of history) of having what were called '*mulieres subintroductæ;*' which "alarmed the zeal of the more pious among the bishops, who employed the utmost efforts of their severity and vigilance to abolish it; though it was a long time before they entirely affected this laudable purpose."

"Thus we have given a short, though not a very pleasing, view of the rulers of the Church during this century." *

Milner, treating of Dioclesian's reign, A.D. 284, writes—"If Christ's kingdom had been of this world, and if its strength and beauty were to be measured by secular prosperity, we should here fix the era of its greatness. But, on the contrary, the era of its actual declension must be dated in the pacific part of Dioclesian's reign. During this *whole* century the work of God, in purity and power, had been tending to decay. The connection with philosophers was one of the principal causes. Outward peace and secular advantages completed the corruption." This corruption is then described—"Notwithstanding," it is added, "this decline both of zeal and of principle—notwithstanding this scarcity of evangelical graces and fruits—still Christian worship was constantly attended, and the number of nominal converts was increasing; but

* Mosheim, cent. iii. part ii. chap. ii. sect. vi. vii.

the faith of Christ itself appeared now an ordinary business; and here TERMINATED [the capitals are the historian's], or nearly so, as far as appears, that great first effusion of the Spirit of God, which began at the day of Pentecost. *Human depravity* effected throughout a general decay of godliness; and one generation of men elapsed, with very slender proofs of the spiritual presence of Christ with His Church."* In proof of all this I quote from St Cyprian (made a bishop A.D. 248) the following: "Episcopi plurimi, quos et hortamento esse oportet ceteris et exemplo, divina procuratione contempta, Procuratores rerum secularium fieri, derelicta Cathedra, Plebe deserta, per alienas provincias oberrantes, negotiationis quæstuosæ nundinas aucupari:" De Lapsis:—that is, in substance, Deserting their sacred functions, very many bishops devoted themselves to the common means of acquiring money, "even to usury itself."† Eusebius also says,—"They (the Christians) were no longer contented with the old edifices, but erected spacious churches, from the very foundations, throughout all the cities."—"After the affairs of our age (he is writing of the time preceding Dioclesian's persecution) were, through too much liberty, changed into looseness and sloth—when some began to envy and revile others, and we were in a manner at war among ourselves, wounding one another with words, as it were with arms and spears—when prelates dashed against prelates, and the people raised fac-

* Milner, cent. iii. chap. xvii.

† Father Paul's Treatise on Benefices, chap. iv.

tions against the people—and when unspeakable hypocrisy and dissimulation had arrived to the height of mischief,—then did the divine vengeance, as it delights to do, gently begin to visit us, &c.—But when we became insensible, and entertained not the least thought of propitiating and appeasing the Deity, but, like some atheistical (*ἄθεοι*) persons, supposing our affairs to be managed regardlessly and without any inspection, we added impieties to impieties—when they who *seemed* our pastors, rejecting the sanctions of religion, were inflamed with mutual contentions, studying nothing else but the augmenting of strifes, menaces, emulation, and mutual enmity and hatred, and greedily challenging to themselves the pre-eminence, as if it were a dominion, *οἷά τε τυραννίδας τὰς φιλαρχίας ἐκθύμως διεκδικοῦντες*,—then,"* &c. He goes on to show that severe divine judgments followed.

Gibbon, the historian of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," treating of the peace and prosperity of the Church under Dioclesian, A.D. 284–303, relates the same corruptions on the authority of Eusebius, with an air of great triumph and satisfaction, and in the most glowing language; and after enumerating the great persons favourable to Christianity, under Dioclesian, such as the empresses, his wife Prisca, and his daughter Valeria, as well as several officers of the palace, he justly remarks, that "the corruptions of manners and principles, so forcibly lamented by Eusebius, may

* Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. viii. cap. i.

be considered, not only as a consequence, but as a proof, of the liberty which the Christians enjoyed and abused under the reign of Dioclesian." With as much reason might the infidel historian attribute these corruptions to the gospel itself, as the advocates of the Voluntary principle ascribe them to the principle of an Establishment, which did not then exist. How much truer is the reflection of the author of the Natural History of Enthusiasm—"But the very same evils, far from being called into existence by the breath of imperial favour, had reached a bold height even while the martyrs were still bleeding!"

Of this period, the celebrated Manton, preaching to the Parliament of England, says, "A little before Dioclesian's persecution (ἀνεφλέγοντο φιλονεικίαις), the Church was rent and torn with intestine broils; pastor against pastor, and people against people. Ease begets pride and wantonness, and that maketh way for contention." It would not be amiss if many in our day would attend to the warning suggested by him in the words that follow—"God may soder you in your own blood and effect union, by making you objects of the same hatred and persecution." He further says, "The Gnostics, by their impure and libidinous courses, made Christianity odious, and then the heathens rose up against them as pests of mankind." *

Were the comparative purity and corruptions of the primitive churches, during the three first centuries, and of the Established Churches of Great

* Manton's Works, vol. iii. part ii. pp. 153, 154.

Britain, during nearly the last three hundred years, to be taken as proofs for or against the Voluntary principle or an Establishment, I hold that the argument is entirely decisive, in every respect, in favour of the latter. In the same extent of country, more Christian excellence, learning, and skill in defending and illustrating the gospel, and less corruption by far in practice, have prevailed in the British than in the primitive churches: and the argument from this source against Establishments seems to me weak and disingenuous in the extreme. Let not this be supposed by the infidel any argument against Christianity. The corrupting, disorganising, and demoralising causes in operation, were so numerous and powerful, that the wonder is, not merely that Christianity had such great success, but that it existed at all. It can only be accounted for by the fact, that the Lord wrought with it "with signs and wonders, and divers gifts of the Holy Ghost."

It may not be amiss to quote here the effect of this historical testimony, even on the mind of a supposed advocate of the Voluntary principle, who has consulted it, I mean Mr Douglas of Cavers, whom the Voluntary writers seem to regard as a great accession to their cause. Were I in his place, and hailed so loudly by such a motley combination as constitute the Voluntary Associations, I should be tempted to ask, like him of other days, when vociferously applauded by the mob, "What fault have I committed?" This gentleman, after saying

that Paul was forced to labour with his own hands, from the scanty supply administered by the primitive churches (by the by, it was not from want, but from choice, that Paul laboured, and that, too, on the principle of an Establishment, that he *might not be dependent* on the *people*), adds—"Yet, so different was the state of things in *one* or *two* hundred years, that the Church of Christ was then suffering, not from poverty, but from wealth." "The early Christians erred in contributing too much. Besides relieving the persecuted, the sick, and the afflicted, and encouraging, from too indiscriminate alms-giving, a number of impostors, they enriched to such an extent their office-bearers and bishops, that long before even persecution had ceased, they made the eminent situations of their churches tempting objects for the disgraceful rivalry of worldly cupidity and secular ambition. The truth is, the Church of Christ was corrupted by wealth long before it was corrupted by power." * In other words, it was so corrupted long before its pretended Establishment. For even before this time the *power* of the bishops was not small, from their acting as judges in civil causes among their own people. If this gentleman gives help to the Voluntaries in one way he takes it away in another. What they gain for the success of the Voluntary cause, they lose in the argument against Constantine. Mr Douglas makes use of this fact, I may remark, for another purpose than to prove the

* Douglas' Address on Slavery, Sabbath Protection, and Church Reform, pp. 54, 55.

corruption of the primitive Church—and it is to disprove the opinion of Paley, who asserts, "to the scheme of voluntary contribution, there exists this insurmountable objection, that few would ultimately contribute anything at all." On a question depending on the practical knowledge of mankind, few will think of placing the speculative notions of Mr Douglas on a level with the severe practical judgment of Paley. The opinion of the latter is justified by all that comes within our own observation, in the universal poverty of the Dissenting churches; which, indeed, is a perfect satire on the opinions which many of their ministers now entertain. It will require more minute information than we are likely to obtain, respecting not merely the *masses* of wealth, but the proper distribution of that wealth in the primitive churches, to prove the Voluntary principle a successful one.* To make it

* I think it proper to make a remark on a statement in Mr Douglas' pamphlet, in which he says—"We have the bare walls of an Established Church, but the living stones are in every sense absent. The population of the country have gone elsewhere." In reference to Scotland generally, it is sufficient answer to this to state, that we have 1067 places of worship, generally better attended than the Dissenting, which number, of all descriptions, Episcopalians and others, 618. Two hundred and fifty of our largest churches or chapels would hold the whole. Even in that district of the country to which Mr Douglas belongs, I know, from personal observation, that the parish churches, with very few exceptions, are well attended. Where it is otherwise, it has arisen entirely from the want of an efficient minister. Where this want has been supplied, and it has been so of late in no small number of instances, the parish church, in every case, has been immediately filled. I know farther, that where Mr Douglas, at great personal expense, employed both Independent and Secession preachers in that district, they were not attended. The

a just one, even in the pretended opinion of its supporters (I say pretended, because none of them act upon it), the supply must arise from the *wise benevolence of real believers*, and must be distributed in such a way as to leave no spot unsupplied. None must be pampered to the neglect of the rest. To be successful, it must either proceed from true Christian character and wisdom, or from superstition. Now, from the character already drawn of the primitive churches, there is little doubt but that their immense wealth flowed in from superstition, and became the property of the bishops in favoured spots—such as wealthy cities or rich districts. All superabundant church property has either been acquired from superstition, or the improper appropriation to particular aggrandisement of what has been intended for the general benefit; and it must be so on the Voluntary principle, till the great majority of mankind become, not only good, but wise—a period that has never yet, at least, arrived. In fact, what is called national church property, in all Christian countries, has been acquired, as shall afterwards be shown, not

people do not follow them. Though, from the learning, station, and Christian character and benevolence of this gentleman, it would be unbecoming not to speak of him with respect, yet there are two circumstances, in my view, which render him an unfit judge in this case, even though his opinion against Establishments had been more clearly expressed. He has a mind naturally more disposed to indulge in pleasing speculations and detached general observations, somewhat in the shape of *oracular dicta*, than in practical reasonings; and, moreover, I believe, he seldom avails himself of the opportunity of observing the state of the parish churches of Scotland.

by a State provision, but by the State's securing to the Church what she herself, either by fair or foul means, had acquired ; and cannot, in the strict sense, be called national property. I do not know that there is any instance on record, in which the State has, by an express act, created out of the general national property a Church fund. The cases of Charlemagne in the eighth, and of Ethelwolf of England in the ninth centuries, and others of later date, to which I shall afterwards refer, can hardly be called exceptions, because, in these cases, the clergy were not only previously in possession of vast wealth, but had expressly claimed, and often obtained, the tithes, not by civil, but by ecclesiastical statutes, to which the people voluntarily yielded—at least there was no compulsion by the State till long after the dominion of the Papacy was fully secured, and the State was mastered by the Voluntary Church. The duty of the State, then, is not more to prevent the total destitution of supply, than to prevent, by wise and fixed laws, the pampering of one part to the starvation of another. In other words, to see that a moderate competency be allocated for the support of a minister, of what it conscientiously deems the true religion, and has power to establish over its whole territory, in such districts as a minister can successfully cultivate.

This will alike prevent plethora and inanition. The Church ought neither to be a spoiled nor pampered nursling, nor a neglected outcast, but a well-trained and properly disciplined and provisioned branch of the great national family. This

is altogether beyond the power of the Voluntary principle to accomplish, as mankind are now constituted, whether we regard their wisdom or their piety. In such times as our own, when the majority are neither religious nor superstitious, Paley's opinion will certainly hold good. Men who are true and wise Christians will give enough for the gospel: men who are superstitious will give too much: men who are neither the one nor the other will leave it unsupplied. The first we cannot expect generally to find them: the second we cannot wish them. Yet these two, shaded into one another, enriched the primitive Church, and ultimately destroyed its purity. The third is our own condition, and what must be expected in ordinary circumstances.

Villers, in his Essay on the Influence of the Reformation, proposed by the National Institute of France, says, "With us the Revolution has dried up this beneficent source (church endowments), which might have been rendered so useful to the progress of knowledge. It has done more: it has swallowed up almost all the patrimony of the ancient establishments of instruction, and has thus deprived the new, which they are labouring to establish, of that material and indispensable basis, without which such establishments can neither subsist solidly with honour or efficacy. An endowment and a real property, to be managed by a local administration, are absolutely necessary to every school which would prosper: it requires a security, an existence different from what may arise

from the casualty of uncertain boarders, or the assistance of Government, which, having to provide for a multitude of other wants, will very frequently be compelled to leave such objects unattended to."* These reflections are applicable with greater force to the endowment of a church, as it cannot be doubted that men have less desire for spiritual than for common knowledge—for the more, than the less important: and if it be the duty and wisdom of every wise nation to provide for schools, much more must it be to provide for churches.

CHAPTER IV.

What Constantine and Succeeding Emperors actually did in reference to a Civil Endowment of the Church, together with a view of some of the General Causes that operated to promote its degeneracy, and to exalt its unlawful power.

LET us now examine the testimony of history in regard to what Constantine actually did for the Church—what were the effects—and whether they were such as to afford an obvious argument to all succeeding generations, and in spite of the advantages of all succeeding experience, against the principle of an Established Church.

In this inquiry it will not be necessary to deter-

* Villers' Reformation, p. 288.

mine very exactly the real character of Constantine, or the exact period of his conversion. Gibbon's account of Constantine's Establishment of Christianity, seems, upon the whole, candid and true. It may be remarked that he speaks with becoming respect and gravity of this Emperor as a statesman and a warrior—and only seems disposed to sneer when he speaks of his Christianity. Yet it does not appear from his account, or from the testimony of history, that this Emperor actually did more for the Church than, on the Voluntary principle, he was legally permitted to do—or if he did, it was only by occasional interferences, not by any regular endowment—no such endowment having been ever conferred by him. "He persevered," says Gibbon, "till he was near forty years of age, in the practice of the established (Pagan) religion." He was a zealous and liberal devotee of the Pagan deities, particularly of Apollo.* His first act in favour of the Christians, while he himself was still Pagan, was the famous edict of Milan, A.D. 313; in which not only a free toleration was given to the Christians, and to all, to adopt and follow what religion they pleased, but, "it was enacted that the places of worship and *public lands* which had been confiscated should be restored to the Church without dispute, without delay, and without expense." † The words of the imperial edict preserved by Eusebius, are, "that license be denied to none at all of following or choosing the observances or religion of

* Gibbon, ch. xx. † Ibid.

the Christians; and that free power be granted to every one to apply his mind to that religion which he judgeth most congruous and agreeable to himself." * In what seems to have been a second edict, commanding the restoration of the churches, and promising indemnification out of the imperial liberality to those who might have purchased them, there are these words—"And inasmuch as the said Christians are known to have had possession, not only of those places wherein they usually assembled themselves, but of others also, which did not particularly and apart belong to any private persons among them, but were the right of a society of them, you shall give order that all these places, according to the aforesaid law, be, without all manner of hesitancy, restored to the said Christians; that is, to every society and assembly of them." † Another imperial edict, which Du Pin ‡ calls the third, restraining the above favour to the Catholic Church, says, "Take care that all estates which did formerly belong to the right of the said churches (whether gardens, houses, or whatever else) be immediately restored to them again." §

These extracts prove,

1. That the Church had public property in churches, and even in "*public lands*," as Gibbon calls them, before the time of Constantine.

2. That at this time he gave no State endowment,

* Euseb. Ecc. Hist. lib. x. cap. v. † Ibid.

‡ For this and the following references to Du Pin, see his Eccl. Hist. vol. i. folio, pp. 161–164. § Ibid.

and in commanding restitution, he simply performed an act of justice.

3. That all religions were equally tolerated.

Du Pin says, that the "fourth edict in favour of religion is dated the last of October, same year (313). It *continues* the immunity of ecclesiastics, whom the heretics had caused to be charged with public taxes, contrary to the privileges which had been granted them." This edict, published so early, seems only to have granted to the Christians a privilege common to other teachers of religion. In the year 319 he confirmed that edict by another. In 330 an edict of a similar kind was promulgated in favour of the Jews.

The next edict in favour of the Christians, dated November 316, is one bearing, "That provision be made for the maintenance of the poor."

Connected with this, it may be proper to mention an edict published, by its date, both in 320 and 326, forbidding the rich to enter into offices in the Church, and thus avoid the public taxes, "Constantine says wisely in this edict, that it was just the rich should maintain the heavy expenses of the State, and that the poor should be fed with the riches of the Church." These riches, let it be observed, were hitherto its own.

"The fifth edict of Constantine for the Christian religion, is dated Nov. 16 (315), wherein he condemns the Jews to the fire that should *abuse* the Christians."

The next edicts mentioned by Du Pin are of

date 318 and 321, granting "that the clergy may give liberty to their slaves, even out of the Church."

"The first which we have of those edicts of Constantine that establishes the jurisdiction of bishops as to temporals, seems to be that which is related in an edition to the Theodosian Code, published by Sirmondus, under Title 17th. It imports, that if those who plead a cause shall appeal to the judgment of the bishops, they shall be referred thither, although the process be entered before another judge."

This, let it be observed, is not so much a new privilege, as the sanctioning of an old custom among the Christians. This subject will be more fully illustrated when we come to speak of ecclesiastical jurisdictions.

An edict for the due observance of the Sabbath was published in the year 321, of which Eusebius says, "To those who had embraced the divinely-inspired faith, he allowed time and leisure for a free exercise of themselves, *according to the usage and order of God's Church*, to the end they might without impediment be present at the performance of the prayers."

He commanded his heathen soldiers to pray on Sabbath, and gave them a form of prayer which is addressed to the supreme God, but makes no reference to Christianity.*

"There is another edict of the first of July, the

* See Eusebius, Vita Const. lib. iv. cap. xviii. xix. xx.

same year, by which he *permits* all sorts of persons to leave their goods by testament to the Catholic Church."

Hitherto we have seen nothing in these edicts that in the least resembles anything like a national endowment, or a national Establishment, of Christianity; nothing, in short, that is inconsistent with the utmost latitude of the Voluntary principle —and no evil for which the Voluntary principle could provide any remedy. All the evils hitherto existing had taken place under it. Had Constantine attempted to prevent them, it would have been an *infringement* of this principle. For, be it observed, though the advocates of this principle do not seem to perceive or avow this consequence of their opinion, that abuses under it may arrive at any height, Churchmen may acquire any degree of wealth, or power, or influence, and even prove most formidable to the State, and yet the State *dares* not interfere. On what principle may it interfere to *prevent* the power of the Church, when acquired by voluntary gifts or concessions, if it must not interfere to promote its benefit? In fact, it was the Voluntary principle which continually arrogated to itself a total independence of the State, not only doctrinally, but civilly, and rejected its interference, that finally, as we shall see, established the horrible tyranny of Rome. In truth, if the State dares not interfere, *circa sacra*, there is no possible check to the usurpations of Churchmen. You have no possible security for their

moderation. If every professing Christian were a perfect saint, neither actuated by human weaknesses nor human passions, then might the Church regulate all its affairs, temporal as well as spiritual, successfully, and forbid any external aid or interference. But while it is the nature of human societies either to decay or advance—either to lose necessary influence, or to acquire too much, there must be an external regulating power. If any individual demur to the society, demand his portion of its wealth, for instance, and the society refuse, the State must then interfere. This abstract Voluntary principle is, in fact, chimerical. It proved so in the case of the primitive churches—out of it arose the Papal tyranny, and out of it will arise such a tyranny again, if it should be established, and the world last as long as give any sect time to advance above the others. Popery seems to be fairly on the way to this consummation in America. It is nearly the most numerous, while it is the most united, of all American denominations.

Though it be a digression, I cannot help remarking, that the Papacy is making America the object of its special attention at this moment, rapidly increasing in numbers and influence; and if the civil power of the States does not interfere, they will, in all probability, be experimentally taught the impolicy and danger of leaving to itself an interest so vitally important and so powerfully influential, either for good or evil, to a community,

as religion. That this is not a vain surmise may be learned from these facts:—In 1789 the Catholics of America, according to the "Tableau des Conversions," were 18,000; in 1830, according to Stuart, 700,000—and in 1833 to the *Voluntary Church Magazine* of March, 800,000—an increase of 45 times in 44 years, being vastly more in proportion than that of the other population. In fact, the United States do find it necessary to interfere *circa sacra*, as is illustrated by the following extract:—"Soon after the conquest of the Dutch Colony by the Duke of York, the Episcopal Church established itself in New York, and derived liberal support from grants of land by the Crown of England. When Trinity Church was chartered, the glebe lands attached to it on Manhattan Island were extensive, and rapidly increasing in value. A remarkable spirit of activity was infused into all its fiscal arrangements. So powerful were the funds of this church, that, after the revolution, the State legislature limited them to a capital, producing an annual revenue of £5000. Their estate, however, produced much more, and they devoted all that exceeded the specified amount to the building and endowment of new churches. At the time when M'Leod's Catechism appeared, serious fears were entertained by the Presbyterian Church, that the Episcopalians would become so powerful as to exercise an undue influence over the political affairs of the State. All this power was exerted in the propagation of the Arminian errors. For

this body, while it adopted the 39 Articles of the Church of England, and the liturgy, was not, like the parent society, composed partly of Calvinists and partly of Arminians, for all were Arminians."* —On this extract I observe, that this property was, no doubt, first acquired by a Crown grant. But it will not be disputed that the Church might easily have acquired an annual revenue of £5000 from other sources. From this sum it became formidable to the State. Had the State been prohibited, on the Voluntary principle, from interfering *circa sacra*, the consequences might have been dangerous. On the other hand, had the State been able to establish a sound creed, with a fixed and regularly distributed provision for the clergy, as in Scotland, there would have been a security both against the political power and Arminian error of the Church. There would have been some security against the abounding error of every kind that inundates that country, the worse than Arminianism of one-half of the Presbyterian body, and the great prevalence of Socinianism. In regard to this latter, Mr Charles Berry, a Socinian teacher at Leicester, in a sermon preached and published, while acknowledging the little progress their opinions have made in England, and attributing it to the "enormous influence of a wealthy and corrupt Establishment," says, "But in the East the cause is advancing; and in the *United States, where there are no obstruc-*

* Wilson's (of New York, 1817) Historical Sketch of Opinions, &c., p. 64. Republished, Paisley, 1827.

tions to the progress of knowledge and truth, the spread of liberal doctrines has exceeded our most sanguine expectations"!! Such is one advantage of the want of an established creed.

While here noticing America, I cannot but allude to the recklessness of statement put forth by our opponents of Establishments regarding that country. While our transatlantic brethren are themselves crying with all their might, "Come over and help us;" proclaiming at every meeting of every religious society, the spiritually destitute condition of their *millions*,—the party writers of this country are unblushingly proclaiming the abundance of their spiritual provision. I cannot be so charitable as believe that this, which is not a matter of opinion, but of fact, can arise from an error of judgment. What does it arise from, then? I shall leave it to others to answer. That I am not charging these writers unjustly, the multiplied facts put forth in so many recent publications amply testify. Two short extracts from the Seventh Report of the American Tract Society, published in the *Scottish Missionary Register* for April 1833, will serve my present purpose. "Ministers of the gospel," says the Report, "to supply the *destitute millions of our country, are not to be found.*" Again—"The census of 1820 extended within a small fraction over 600,000 square miles. If from this we deduct 60,000, embracing portions of the country where the privileges of the gospel are most richly enjoyed, we have remaining 540,000

square miles of inhabited territory, probably embracing nine millions of our population, more than one-half of whom (that is, about *five millions*), it is estimated, by those best acquainted with the subject, are unsupplied with stated evangelical preaching"!! Whether are we to believe the Americans themselves, or their Voluntary eulogists?

States should beware of this Voluntary principle, which will soon form an *imperium in imperio*, as will be clearly seen in tracing the rise of the Popish domination. If Church and State are not allied in some such way as in Scotland—either the one or the other will tyrannise. It was a conviction of this kind that actuated our reformers in framing our Church polity.

Why is it that the Protestant States of the Continent, and they are, without dispute, *liberal* enough, with infidel France herself, do not leave the clergy to voluntary contribution?* The reason is, they are in close contact with the working of the system of Popish beggary and voluntary superstition. Nay, why is this system such a favourite with the Irish priesthood, and so little advocated even by the Irish Protestant Dissenters? The reason, we apprehend, is the same. The Popish priests will take all that the State will give, but will not be limited to that alone. It looks all very fine in abstract theory, that Church and State should each pursue the lofty tenor of their way, and never deign

* A law now exists in France prohibiting bequests to religious communities, without the special permission of the State.

to bestow a thought on each other. But as human nature now is, this cannot be. They will not run in separate parallel lines *ad infinitum.* Human corruption is a deranging force, that will infallibly at last bring them into collision, and force them to make provision for their mutual welfare and security.

To return from this digression. We have said, that hitherto there has been nothing like a National Establishment or endowment of Christianity. The general principle of an Establishment, namely, an alliance between Church and State, may exist, it is true, without an endowment. The first apparent notice of it, in this form, in Du Pin's Summary of Constantine's Edicts for the Church, is in these words:—"He" (Eusebius *) "produces likewise in the same place his edicts against the worship of false gods, and for the establishment of the Church."

In referring to Eusebius, Vita Const. lib. ii., and reading from cap. xxii. on to cap. lvi., I find that what is here called an establishment of the Church, is simply a declaration by the emperor of God's great blessings to himself; his obligations to promote God's cause; his declaration of liberty, protection, and deliverance from bondage and tyranny, to the Christians; the granting to the Church, "*if none of their kindred be left,*" the confiscated goods of martyrs, on the principle that the martyrs would themselves unquestionably have thus

* De Vita Const. lib. ii. cap. xx. xxiv. xlviii. year 324.

disposed of them to the Church which they loved to the death; the restoration of their possessions to the churches; an *exhortation* to worship God, and a letter against idolatry. The fifty-sixth chapter is headed, "How he *prays* that all persons may be Christians, *but forces nobody*." This prayer is worthy of transcription in part:—

"I desire that Thy people may live in repose, and without tumult or disturbance (*ἀστασίαστον*), for the common advantage of the world, and of all men. May those involved in error (*πλανώμενοι*), with gladness partake of an enjoyment of the same peace and quiet with the believers. For this reparation of mutual society (*κοινωνίας*) will be of great efficacy in leading men to the true way. Let no person molest another. What his soul desireth, that let every one practise. Yet it behoves those whose sentiments are true, to be firmly persuaded that they only shall live holily and purely whom Thou callest (to this), that they should acquiesce in Thy holy laws. *But let those who withdraw themselves have their temples of lies* (*ψευδολογίας τεμένη*), *since they desire them*," &c.*

In all this there is nothing like an exclusive Establishment, much less, the donation of a church endowment.

The only apparent exceptions, in cap. xliv. and xlv., are, that persons in high offices, as governors of provinces, were chosen from among the Christians; or, if not, they were forbidden to worship idols. To

* Euseb. Vita Const. lib. ii. cap. lvi.

such evils, if evils they be (only heathens would esteem them such), the Voluntary principle can offer no check. If the executive is forbidden thus to exercise its discretion, there is an interference in the matter of religion; and here, we see again, the Voluntary principle is incompatible with the nature of government. Interference, in some way, there must be; even if that interference should be to compel the leaving religion to itself.

Cap. xlv. is headed, "Concerning the laws forbidding sacrifices, and ordering the churches to be built."

"Soon after, two laws were issued out, at one and the same time. The one whereof forbade the *detestable sacrifices* to idols," &c.; the other, was ordering "the structures of the oratories to be raised to a vast height, and the churches of God to be enlarged both in length and breadth; as if all mankind (I had almost said) were about to unite themselves to God, and as if the madness of Polytheism had been wholly destroyed." Money was given for the building of these churches out of the imperial treasures. A particular account is given in the third book of the life of Constantine, cap. xxvi., &c., of the erection of a church at Jerusalem, in honour of the Saviour. In this account, allusion is made to the abominations of idolatry, which would justify, in any sense, their abolition. And he must be a bold advocate of the Voluntary principle, who would, for its sake, prohibit governments from abolishing the murder, prostitution, and im-

posture of Pagan worship; or who would not sympathise with Constantine, when about to build a church on the ruins of a temple sacred "to that lascivious demon Venus," he ordered the very earth of that place to be carried away, "in regard it had been defiled with the gore of sacrifices offered to Demons."

Gifts to the clergy, and to the people, after the fashion of the Roman emperors, were no doubt liberally bestowed by Constantine. "But," says Eusebius, "his princely magnanimity (*Βασιλέως μεγαλοψυχία*) bestowed other and surpassing great favours upon the people that were strangers to our religion (*δήμοις τε τοῖς ἐκτός*), and upon all nations."* These are not diminished in amount, but probably magnified, in the courtly style of Eusebius, and in the fulness of the satisfaction which he felt on the peace and prosperity of the Church. But, indeed, who that knows anything of the dreadful sufferings of those early followers of the Redeemer—who "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; who were stoned, who were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword," &c.—does not sympathise with the following pleasing strain of feeling, in which he indulged on the accession of Constantine, and the overthrow of their Pagan persecutors, as recorded in these words—"A bright and glorious day, no cloud overshadowing it (*μηδενὸς νέφους αὐτὴν ἐπισκιάζοντος*), did enlighten, with rays

* Vita Const. lib. ii. cap. xxii.

of heavenly light, the churches of Christ over all the earth; and among all Christians there was an inexpressible joy, and a kind of celestial gladness!"* We can scarcely believe, that if some of our modern sentimentalists, who mourn so pathetically over the evils of Constantine's conversion, and inveigh, with such declamatory bitterness, against the succeeding, or, as they say, the consequent corruptions, had "come out of so great tribulation," they would have failed to accept with gladness the peace which God had provided; that *they* would have chosen "strangling and death rather than life." Dr Wardlaw acknowledges, that "it was no small matter for"† the Christians to find relief from persecution; adding, "and it contributed, I doubt not, to reconcile them to the measure." In this language there is evidently implied the assumption, that they were averse abstractly to the "measure." This seems to me a gratuitous, and, I must say, an unfair assumption, of which there is not, so far as I am aware, the slightest shadow of proof, either attempted to be given, or anywhere to be found: the early Christians never having entertained the remotest idea that it was sinful in the State to give, or in them to accept its aid for their religion. Withal, then, it does not appear that Constantine did more than any "nursing father," of equal wealth and power, might, on the Voluntary principle, be expected to do, who was piously disposed; nay, it

* Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. x. cap. i.

† Sermon on Civil Establishments of Christianity, p. 36.

does not appear that he did as much, in proportion, as some private Christians in modern times. Three thousand *folles* from a Roman Emperor to the Churches of Africa, as mentioned by Eusebius, and estimated by Gibbon at eighteen thousand pounds, was not a hundredth part so munificent as the gift of one thousand pounds to the Secession, by James Douglas, Esq. I know no principle on which emperors, or "kings," can be forbidden "to bring presents," which seems to have been the amount of Constantine's liberality. His liberality may have been great, but it did not amount to an endowment. Whatever corruptions flowed from it, they were no more than the natural effect of the progressive prosperity of the Church under the Voluntary principle.

I have not thought it necessary to advert to the pretended donation of Constantine, in which he is supposed to have given to the Bishop of Rome, and his successors, the sovereignty of that city, and of the provinces of the Western Empire. This donation Du Pin, a Roman Catholic, pronounces a forgery of the eleventh century, and that on evidence that cannot be questioned.* No one, in short, gives it the least credit. It may here be proper to observe, however, that so great was the influence of this forgery, that it continued to be received as the current belief for many centuries; and thus passed into the popular language of

* See Du Pin's Eccl. Hist., Dublin edition, folio, vol. i. pp. 162, 163.

Europe, to an extent from which it has not yet recovered. Even the great Dante, whose indignant spirit boldly rebuked the corruptions of the Church,* and whose mighty genius burst through the surrounding darkness, was deceived by this pretended donation, and thus laments it—

> "Ahi, Costantin, di quanto mal fu matre,
> Non la tua conversion, ma quella dote
> Che da te prese il primo ricco patre!" †

Literally rendered—"Ah! Constantine of what mischief was not thy conversion, but especially that gift which the first rich father received from thee, the cause!" Yet, not long after Dante's time, "In the beginning of the fifteenth century, Laurentius Valla, 'who rescued literature from the grave, and restored to Italy the splendour of her ancient eloquence,' ‡ wrote against the pretended donation of Constantine." § No learned man ever supposes that such a gift was bestowed, yet still the delusion attaches to the name of that Emperor; and even the historians, who furnish the very facts that disprove it, still speak in terms that would seem to give it credit. Hence much of the misapprehension that prevails on this subject.

The first case, in a matter of doctrine or Church government, in which Constantine seems to have

* See these in Dante, as referred to by M'Crie, History of Reformation in Italy, ch. i.

† Dante, Inferno, canto xix.

‡ Erasmi, Epist. lib. vii. ep. 3.

§ M'Crie's History of the Reformation in Italy, ch. i.

interfered, was in the schism of the Donatists. At this time he was not a Christian, and yet *voluntary Christians*, giving an example of Erastianism, appealed to his decision, and this nothing could prevent them from doing. It is unnecessary to give an account of this sect, and the terrible commotions they excited; and which called for the armed interference of the State. "Vast numbers of these Donatists," says Brown, "under the name of Circumcellions, took arms, and, in the most cruel and perfidious manner, spread pillage, slaughter, and massacre, through the whole of North Africa, among the friends of Cecilian. This horrible confederacy of desperate ruffians rendered the whole sect an object of the utmost abhorrence."—"Finding no other method effectual, Constantine, by the advice of the African governors, and when things appeared on the eve of a civil war, abolished the laws against the Donatists, and allowed everybody to adhere to what party he pleased." But neither this nor the exertions of his successor Constans had the desired effect. "Their Circumcellions prosecuted their assassinations and massacres with the utmost fury and rage." * These wretches were not called into existence by Establishments. They arose under the Voluntary system. Nor could they be dealt with in any other way than by the power and arms of the State. And yet, I suppose, it is of them Dr Wardlaw writes in the following strain of lamentation:—"And, in the internal discipline of the

* Brown's Eccl. Hist. cent. iv. sect. iv.

Church of Christ, oh, what a revolution! The apostolical rule had been, 'A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.' But now heresy in individuals is visited with imprisonment, confiscation, and exile." Of this, as yet, we have had no proof. As far as we have gone, "the terrible commotions," the fierce divisions, and excommunications, of the Church, and the appeals to the State, and its armed interference, have been under the Voluntary principle. As yet, we have seen nothing of "orthodox princes contending against heterodox princes, at the head of their armies."

Another great dispute that arose about the year 317 disturbed the Church—namely, the Arian heresy. Like the Sabellian, it arose while the Church was still, without any dispute, a Voluntary Church. "At first the Emperor Constantine contented himself with despatching missives to the contending parties, admonishing them to put an end to their disputes. But the contention and the commotions attending it spreading more and more in the empire, he, in 325, convened a general council of bishops at Nice," &c.* This dispute continued under Constantine's sons. Under Constantius, who became sole emperor in 350, "the Christian Church was one perpetual scene of tumult and violence, and of religious warfare, carried on without regard to religion, justice, or humanity."† As similar divisions had existed before the emperor

* Brown's Eccl. Hist. cent. iv. sect. iv. † Ibid.

became Christian, so they continued when he became Pagan. "Julian (the apostate) treated both the parties with a careless indifference, well pleased to behold them devour one another."* These contentions seem altogether unconnected with the Establishment of Christianity, and existed in reality before it had taken place. But granting them, as undoubtedly they were, to have been fomented by Arian emperors who engaged in the controversy, it would be as unfair and illogical to trace the miserable condition of the Church, during its continuance, to the legitimate exercise of power in maintaining *truth*, as it would be to charge the Divine ordinance of civil government in the abstract with all the miseries which have arisen to mankind from the mismanagement of weak, or the cruelty of despotic, rulers. Succeeding emperors tolerate or persecute by turns. The privileges acquired by the Church were rather the effect of its own perseverance, and in the gradual progress of events, than resulting merely from imperial favours.

Taking here a short review of the evidence adduced, we see,—

That vast corruptions existed previously to the time of Constantine;

That almost every corruption in doctrine and practice that afterwards disfigured the Church, not only existed, but reached a bold height, previously to the Emperor's conversion;

That in reality he never endowed the Church;

* Brown's Eccl. Hist. cent. iv. sect. iv.

That its wealth was acquired by voluntary contributions;

That the imperial gifts even were of this description;—

Hence Gibbon says, "Eight years after the Edict of Milan, Constantine granted to all his subjects the free and universal permission of bequeathing their fortunes to the Holy Catholic Church; and their devout liberality, which, during their lives, was checked by luxury or avarice, flowed with a profuse stream at the hour of their death;"*—

That whatever evils now existed actually sprung from the Voluntary principle—not from the connection of Church and State;

That Constantine, on becoming a Christian, could hardly have done less in favour of the Church than he did; and that, much as he has been blamed, he was tolerant even of the Pagans.

Though Constantine convened councils, they were not new to the Church. Even during the second century, in the words of Gibbon, "A regular correspondence was established between the provincial councils, which mutually communicated and approved their respective proceedings; and the Catholic Church soon assumed the form, and acquired the strength of a great federative republic."† How does this testimony correspond with the assertion of Dr Wardlaw—that, in the primitive ages, "each church," or congregation, "was a

* Gibbon, chap. xx. A.D. 321.

† Ibid. chap. xv.; Mosh. cent. ii. part ii. chap. ii.

missionary society, every individual feeling that all depended on his own zeal?" He has professed that he will not reply, except to acknowledge error. Surely this statement, like some others, requires at least an explanation.

Constantine does not seem to have decided in religious matters on his own authority; and generally interfered only *circa sacra.* He himself knew that to this his province should be confined. Eusebius represents him as saying to the bishops, "You are bishops in those matters transacted within the Church; but in them done without the Church, I am a bishop constituted by God." *

The following extract, by a seceding historian, gives what we deem very nearly a just general account of Constantine's conduct to the Church—"Hence" (from many follies and absurdities in doctrine and practice which the historian relates), "no wonder the practical part of religion was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. Constantine the Great made no essential change in the government of the Church, but himself assumed a kind of supremacy over the bishops. It is true he did not pretend that any but the clergy had power of deciding the religious and internal affairs of the Church, relative to forms of worship, orthodoxy, and the like; but he claimed for the magistrate a power to regulate the external affairs relative to clerical possessions, reputations, rights, privileges, and offences against the civil law, and

* Vita Const. lib. iv. cap. xxiv.

the like. In consequence whereof, he and his successors called councils, and sometimes presided in them; terminated differences between bishops and the people; fixed the boundaries of ecclesiastical provinces, &c. But this distinction of the external and internal government of the Church was never accurately explained or determined; hence the emperors sometimes decided things purely ecclesiastic and internal, and the bishops, upon other occasions, determined things relating merely to the external government of the Church."*

In estimating the effects of Constantine's conversion to Christianity on the state of the Church, while we are ready to admit that the "tide of corruption," which at the most was only "kept back," but had long been gathering, by every successive stream, in the course of years, and accession of numbers and wealth to the Church, and rolling on in great force, as Dr Wardlaw, by using such expressions, evidently felt, might obtain, in some respects, "a freer influx," by the acquisition of imperial countenance—we must not forget that important benefits were conferred by it on the Church. In its proper place, we shall show that one of these benefits was actually a check to the power of the Church, which yet finally surmounted all opposition. In the meantime, we may surely venture to mention, among these benefits, the observance of the Sabbath; the prohibition of the impure and cruel rites of Paganism, "of lewd,

* Brown, cent. iv. sect. iii.

impious, and inhuman customs,"* of the murderous fights of gladiators; the multiplication of copies of the Scriptures; the profession of the Christian religion in the court and army; the religious example unquestionably held out to the world, at least, in the conduct of the Emperor of Rome; his earnest intercessions and pleadings with distant monarchs in behalf of religion, and the vast extension of the gospel to many nations; the settlement of the bloody quarrels and commotions of the Donatists,† the second order of pernicious Dissenters, who, not content with wishing to divest the people of a voice in the election of bishops, were guilty of every enormity of cruelty and assassination; the calling of councils to settle the divisions and heresies of the Church, which he had not created, but received as an inheritance from his Pagan predecessors; and his continual exhortations to peace and concord.‡ Of these councils Milner says, "On all subjects which are esteemed of moment and general concern, common sense hath ever dictated to mankind the propriety and advantage of holding councils, by which the wisdom of the MANY might be collected, concentrated, and directed to beneficial purposes,"——

* Milner.

† Constantine treated these wretches with pity, as if they were madmen, or persons possessed with the devil, *οὓς ἐλεεῖσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ κολάζεσθαι χρῆναι*, Eusebius Vita Const. lib. i. cap. xlv.

‡ See Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. and Vita Const., and Milner, vol. ii. 8vo, p. 45.

"The Council at Jerusalem was intrinsically of more value than all the wealth and power of the Roman empire. It was by a council also that Cyprian was enabled to serve the Church substantially, though in one instance he failed; and again, the council which dictated the letter concerning Paul of Samosata, will deserve the thanks of the Church of Christ to the end of the world." * So may it be said of the Council of Nice, whatever faults attended it.

After the various evidence adduced, the following summary of Milner will be admitted to be nearly the truth by every impartial mind :—

"It is not to be expected that all should think alike. Let Christian fundamentals, therefore, be preserved as effectually as possible by an ecclesiastical Establishment, and by laws which defend and support it; let there be a toleration for those who profess themselves to hold the essentials of Christianity, but may not think themselves authorised in conscience to conform, in all points, to the Established Church. This is not only allowable, but perfectly just and equitable. To deny it is tyranny. Thus acted Theodosius with respect to the Novatians; *and this seems the utmost limit of human wisdom in this difficult subject.*

"The advantages of a Christian Establishment are doubtless great: the prevention of general profaneness, the decent observation of the Sabbath,

* Milner, cent. iii. ch. xvii. vol. i. p. 495.

and the opportunity of diffusing the gospel in dark and barbarous regions—all these things were the *evident* good consequences of the Establishment during the fourth century. But let us suppose that Constantine and his successors had contented themselves with encouraging the gospel, and had permitted idolatry and irreligion to continue unchecked: considering the depravity of human nature, one sees not how, without a miracle, Christianity would have pervaded the Roman empire at all; half, or the major part, of the Roman world might have remained in irreligion and idolatry to this day. Similar advantages of an Establishment may be observed in the history of our own country.

"On the other hand, it has been frequently said, that the great corruption of the gospel began from the days of Constantine. This I have shown already was not the case. The corruption had begun a considerable time before; nor does it appear that the decline of vital religion was greater than might *have been expected from the general course of things;* and if no Establishment at all had taken place, it would probably have been more rapid. There would certainly have been this remarkable difference, namely, that half of the Roman world, without the aid of the magistrate, would have remained destitute of even the form of Christianity. Corruption of doctrine and discipline ought not to be laid at the door of

ecclesiastical Establishments, but to be imputed *to the degeneracy of men themselves.* It would not be hard to point out many persons in our own country who voluntarily separate from the Establishment, and who are nearly void of church discipline, and even more deeply and more systematically corrupt in doctrine than the most heterodox and unevangelical theologians, who inconsistently remain members of the Church of England. The best ecclesiastical Establishments cannot prevent the decay of vital godliness; but, under the providence of God, they strengthen the hands of sincere, humble-minded believers, and check the influence both of open and of disguised enemies of Christianity." *

How greatly this conclusion has been justified in the history of the churches of Great Britain is well known. How much more reasonable and consistent with the testimony of history is this representation of the corruption of the Church, than that which is given in the following unauthorised language of Dr Wardlaw! After a quotation, for which the authority is not given, but the object of which is to show that the corruption of the Church is to be dated from the Council of Nice, he adds, "When we can fix the turning-point—the point of terminating advancement, and commencing retrogression—when we can settle and define the precise boundary at which the

* Milner, vol. ii. pp. 218, 219.

flowing tide began to recede, we are surely more than warranted in thus assigning the cause." *

Now, in my view, if the testimony of history is to be our guide, as it must be in this case, a more unwarranted decision was never made. I can hardly imagine that it *was* made with the pages of impartial history open before the writer. In a matter depending not on opinion, but on historical proof, some references to it in a published sermon ought surely to have been made. Indeed, the very language of this writer himself, where he speaks of the "tide of corruption" being "kept back" by the Pagan empire, indicates a consciousness that another tide than the "flowing tide" of gospel light and purity, whose "turning-point" he now so distinctly marks, was in full and dangerous course. It seems inexpressibly absurd to attribute the corruptions of the Church, generated by the complicated and various causes that were in operation for fourteen hundred years, to one single event—an event that was in a great measure neutralised by the Paganism and heresy of succeeding emperors, who acted their part of chastisers of the Church with tolerable severity and effect.

I cannot here but advert for a moment to the strange notion of this writer—that it was by Constantine's conversion (I say conversion, for it can hardly, as I have shown, be called Establishment, in the sense to which our opponents attribute

* Wardlaw's Sermon on Civil Establishments of Christianity, p. 42.

its corruptions), "the way was effectually opened for the man of sin, and the whole antichristian 'mystery of iniquity.'"*

"Many," says the Rev. Mr Willis, in his excellent Discourse on Ecclesiastical Establishments, "many speak of the history of the Church previous to Constantine, as if indeed it were desirable that the sword of persecution had never been sheathed." The above notion of Dr Wardlaw seems to imply the absolute necessity of a Pagan persecutor to prevent the body of Voluntary Christians from giving birth to the man of sin. The "mystery" had long been working, and only requiring a favourable moment, or rather a concurrence of favourable circumstances, for full development. These circumstances were not the events of a day, but were carefully watched and seized during a course of centuries of perseverance, intrigue, and ambition, till the great tyranny was fully consummated towards the end of the eleventh century.

The hindrance to the full development of the mystery alluded to in 2 Thess. ii. 3–7—"He who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way," was not, we believe, "the then existing heathen," more than Christian, "government of Imperial Rome." It was no doubt the Imperial Government, which, for a long period, strenuously opposed the usurpations of the Papacy; but its being "taken out of the way," was not in my opinion

* Wardlaw's Sermon on Civil Establishments of Christianity, p. 40.

Constantine's conversion, but the removal of the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople, and the gradual decay of the imperial power over the Pope, who by degrees became sole master of the capital of the Western Empire. The Bishop of Rome struggled to obtain the ascendency; the patriarch of Constantinople, aided by the imperial presence, strenuously opposed his pretensions. "Circumstances mightily favouring the Roman," says Brown, "he at last prevailed." The same historian, treating of the period from 330 to 366, says, "Upon account of the distinguished rank and glory of Rome, its bishops had *long ere now* struggled hard for a superiority over the rest. Their larger incomes, especially now, enabled them to make a more pompous appearance, and so render themselves revered by the ignorant people, who had almost lost all sight of the simplicity and honours of the gospel." Such a transformation could not be the work of a day. The historian goes on—"But the real fatness of the benefice, the carnal pomp and pretence to power, *especially after the Emperor's removal of his residence to Constantinople*, that attended the office, were sufficient to make the worthless clergy contend for it in the most scandalous manner." * After mentioning a schism about 366, which produced "inhuman massacres and barbarous desolation in the city" (the same had taken place among the Donatists before Constantine's conversion), he says, "*As after the Emperor's removal to Constantinople,*

* Brown, cent. v. sect. iii., cent. iv. sect. iii.

the bishops took more upon them," &c. They availed themselves of every turn of favour in the emperors, and of every appeal by the bishops, and of the superstition of the people, to advance their own power. "The emperors, by their superior power, were a disagreeable check to them." *

The opinion of Dr Wardlaw seems that of a man who has not especially examined history on the point, but has given a plausible representation, which will be received by those who cannot patiently examine and balance the various facts and circumstances. The opinion of Mr Willis seems to be the result of actual and fair examination, when he says, "And the more we attend to the nature as well as the rise of Popery, that 'mystery of iniquity,' which does not date its origin from Constantine, but from the apostles' days, the more we shall see, that whatever may be allowed as to the occasional advantage it derived from the connection of Church and State, it was sometimes, again, so checked by that very connection, that the principle of Establishments, is not in the least to be held answerable for that degeneracy."

We may now ask, if it is so very obvious as some people venture to affirm, that the Establishment of Christianity under Constantine was the primary and principal cause of its decay, and readily answer that it was not—that, in truth, its greatest corruptions hitherto had taken place under the Voluntary

* Brown, cent. v. sect iii.

principle. For these that principle had as little the power of remedy as of prevention. By what means could it prevent the gifts of voluntary superstition, or wrest from the ecclesiastics their overgrown wealth, or cure their luxury and ambition? How could it possibly prevent the conversion and liberality of kings and emperors, or remedy the general depravity of mankind?—a depravity which even the curious device of keeping up a pagan imperial Establishment for its suppression could not subdue. But do the advocates of the Voluntary principle not perceive, that even this curious device is actually a violation of their principle; being, to all intents and purposes, a state interference to prevent the corruptions of religion? It is true that the Church, like the individual Christian, may sometimes require the rod of chastisement and affliction, to subdue the inherent depravity of human nature; but it would be about as reasonable to contend for a pagan empire to effect this object in the Church, as it would be to contend that every Christian should be formally provided with a tormentor for his spiritual benefit. This must be left to the providence of God. If Independency were the dominant sect, as, if active, ambitious, and cunning enough, it might soon be, what charm is there in the Voluntary principle to keep it in proper check? None whatever. For this purpose must we set up a Popish or Pagan Establishment "in terrorem?" There are, both in the Independent and Secession Churches of this city, and elsewhere, the incipient

principles of church property, in old churches let to sects whom the proprietors esteem unsound in doctrine, in crypts, and stores, and cellarage, and other means of gain. We do not find that the Independents rejected the favours of Oliver Cromwell in other days, nor do we see any great signs of rejecting permanent gifts, if they should now, either by the piety or folly of men, be bequeathed to these bodies. What can, I again ask, prevent these bodies, if circumstances should favour them, from again usurping the wealth of the nation, like their Popish predecessors? Nothing but a State interference, which they reject, and can by no means on their principle allow. In short, this Voluntary principle is incompatible with the present state of mankind, and altogether chimerical, so long as it cannot be denied that the majority of professing Christians are not Christians indeed. Church equality, on the Voluntary principle, is as chimerical as political equality of rank. Both in the one and the other it is a figment of the brain, and has been proved so in every country where it has had time to be tried, and we may venture to affirm, will be proved so with all who attempt it.

There were certain privileges granted by the Roman emperors to the clergy, to which, I believe, modern Voluntary Churchmen will hardly object, but the necessity or admission of which, will show their scheme to be chimerical. I allude to privileges granted to the clergy, and sometimes withdrawn from them, especially by Julian, namely,

immunities, "A muneribus sordidis et extraordinariis, a civilibus videlicet, et personalibus muneribus et extraordinariis."* Are the Voluntary clergy of modern times prepared to render "personal" services to the State, to go out to battle like any other man, to "perform sordid and civil offices," if they should be so required? Or do they, in virtue of their office, claim from the State an exemption? If they do, it can only be on the ground of benefit to the religion of the country, and it is clear that they are thus asking for the Church a civil favour—not merely protection, but privilege. In short, their abstract notion of church independence is incompatible with the nature of government. The clergy *must* be indebted to the State for peculiar favours, or cease to be a peculiar body, set apart for the services of religion. If they say that such an immunity is plainly necessary to their office, then the question between us, after all, is only one of degree, not of abstract principle. It is, in short, only a question *how far* it is expedient for the State to aid the Church, to grant it favours—not whether it should grant it any at all. If, as ministers of religion, they contend for *privileges* of any kind, it must be on the principle of an Establishment, namely, that the State can and ought to concern itself for the advancement of religion.

In conclusion, on this part. While we maintain, from what has been already adduced, that the corruptions of Constantine's Establishment have been

* See Codex Theodosianus, xvi. tom. vi. tit. ii. Com. Gothofredi.

grossly exaggerated, we contend, that whatever they may have been, it is no argument against the Establishment in Scotland, which has been, in reality, vastly less corrupted than the Voluntary Church of the second and third centuries; and we would deem it matter of gratitude to Almighty God, that by the goodness of His providence we have in this country been so highly favoured, and should esteem it both presumptuous and unwise to throw away our present blessings from imaginary notions of a perfection which the Church of Christ on earth has never yet exhibited. It is truly surprising that men of general good character and principles, and respectable talent, with the lessons of past experience before them, and with any knowledge of human depravity and weakness, should still trust so much to their own opinion, as to believe that such a new light has descended upon them, as will enable them to overturn the best and most efficient system for the religious instruction of this country which the world has ever seen, and to raise in its stead, and preserve to future generations, "an edifice without a flaw." While we account it the duty, on scriptural grounds, we would also deem it the wisdom, of every Christian country to establish the system of true religion. Again I repeat, that if a proper and legitimate connection between Church and State is not established, the one will be sure in the end to invade the rights of the other.

This is beautifully expressed by Giannone, in

his 'Istoria de Napoli,' a work for which the author was persecuted by the Court of Rome, and had to seek shelter in the dominions of the King of Sardinia, where he died:—"Riconosciute fra noi queste due potenze procedenti da un medesimo principio, ch'è Iddio, da cui deriva ogni potestà, e terminanti ad un medesimo fine, ch'è la beatitudine, vero fine dell'uomo: è stato necessario, si proccurasse, che queste due potenze avessero una corrispondenza insieme, ed una sinfonia,* cioè a dire un' armonia ed accordo composto di cose differenti, per comunicarsi vicendevolmente la loro virtù, ed energia; dimanierachè se l'Imperio soccore colle sue forze al Sacerdozio, per mantenere l'onor di Dio, ed il Sacerdozio scambievolmente stringe ed unisce l'affezion de' Popoli all'ubbidienza del Principe, tutto lo Stato sarà felice, e florido: per contrario, se queste due potenze sono discordanti fra' loro come se il Sacerdozio abusandosi della divozion de' Popoli intraprendesse sopra l'Imperio o governamento politico, e temporale: ovvero se l'Imperio voltando contra Dio quella forza, che gli ha posta fra le mani, attentasse sopra il Sacerdozio, tutto va in disordine, in confusione, ed in ruina:"—that is, "These two powers (the temporal and spiritual) being recognised among us, proceeding from one and the same source, that is God, from whom every power is derived, and terminating in one and the same end, which is happiness, the true end of man, it has been necessary, that it may be procured,

* Novel. 42, Just.

that these two powers should have a correspondence with one another; and a symphony,* that is to say, a harmony and agreement composed of different things, to communicate mutually their virtue and energy; so that if the State with its power aids the Church to maintain the honour of God, and the Church, in exchange, binds and unites the affection of the people in obedience to the ruler, the whole commonwealth will be happy and flourishing. On the contrary, if these powers are discordant among themselves, if the Church, *abusing the devotion of the people*, should usurp it over the State, or political and temporal government, or if the State, turning against God that power which He has placed in its hands, should make attempts upon the Church, all goes into disorder, confusion, and ruin."† Such an issue the Voluntary principle cannot prevent.

* Nov. 42, Just.

† Giannone Istoria Civile del Regno di Napoli, Lib. i. cap. xi. tom. i. 4to, pp. 47, 48. I cannot help quoting a few lines more in this note. "E poiche queste due potenze si rincontrano per necessità insieme in tutti i luoghi, ed in tutti i tempi, ed ordinariamente in diverse persone, e dall'altra parte tutte due sono sovrane in loro spezie, niente affatto dependendo l'una dall'altra; l'infinita Sapienza per evitare il disordine estremo, che nasce inevitabilmente dalla loro discordia, ha piantati limiti si fermi ed ha messe separazioni si evidenti fra loro, che chiunque vorrà dare, benche piccol luogo alla ragione, non si potrà ingannare nella distinzione delle loro appartenenze; poichè qual cosa è piu facile a distinguere che le cose sacrate dalle profane, e le spirituali dalle temporali? Non bisogna dunque, se non praticare questa bella regola che il nostro Redentore ha pronunciata di sua propria bocca, *Reddite quæ sunt Cæsaris Cæsari, et quæ sunt Dei Deo.* Regolamento assai breve ma per certo assai netto, e chiaro," &c. That is, "And since these two powers by necessity meet together in all places and in all times, and ordinarily in different

I shall endeavour to illustrate this last position by a farther summary of the history of the advancement of the Pope's supremacy—in which I shall endeavour to show that the usurpations of the Romish Church arose on the Voluntary principle, and were by it most successfully promoted.

Principle on which was reared the Romish domination.—The device of maintaining the Pagan empire of Rome, whose removal is lamented by Dr Wardlaw, as a counteracting power to the corruptions of human nature, even under the profession of voluntary Christianity, is certainly too ridiculous to merit any consideration. Ridiculous as it is, however, and inefficient, as we have seen, as it proved, still it seems to be the only device that could possibly afford any corrective on the Voluntary principle; and that it could afford, only on the supposition that it was not under the same moral obligations as a Christian government, and might therefore act the part of "scourge of God"

persons—and, on the other hand, both are sovereign in their kinds, the one by no means depending on the other—infinite wisdom, to avoid the extreme disorder which inevitably springs up from their disunion (*discordia*), has planted limits so firm, and has set separations between them so evident, that whoever will give even a small exercise to reason cannot be deceived in the distinction of their claims: since what thing can be more easily distinguished than sacred things from profane, than spiritual from temporal? It is necessary, then, only to practise the beautiful rule which our Redeemer hath pronounced by His own mouth, 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's'—a rule sufficiently short, but certainly sufficiently succinct and clear."

with impunity. But what principle could possibly prevent a Roman emperor from becoming Christian? It was the duty of every Christian to labour and pray for his conversion, and *whatever* might have been the consequences in the providence of God, they were not responsible. What could possibly have prevented him from giving his countenance and encouragement, his power and his support, to the ministers and professors of any religion he pleased? What could have prevented Constantine, and his successors, from accumulating gifts unequally on favourite bishops or favoured spots? Most assuredly not the Voluntary principle, even although he had been brought to acknowledge it. For he must even on it have been permitted to "bring presents," suited to his imperial rank and wealth, and according to his own judgment. Had it even been possible, as it was not, to have obtained a constitutional government, and to have imposed restraining laws on the Emperor, that he might not unduly pamper, and thereby corrupt, the ministers of religion, this could only have been done on the principle of an Establishment—namely, that the national government may interfere about religion. State interference, on the Voluntary principle, is as sinful and unlawful for the *prevention*, as for the *promotion*, of the Church's temporal prosperity. Each, on the Voluntary principle, is a presumptuous touching of "the ark of God" by profane hands. What preventive remedy, as well as promotive aid, can be found, then, in the present condition of

mankind? The only restraining and regulating, as well as aiding power, clearly is, a properly defined Establishment, having, as in the Church of Scotland, while connected with the State, an entire independency in spiritual matters, and possessing within itself the means of spiritual discipline, reformation, correction, and improvement. Had Constantine made, and succeeded in an attempt to erect permanently, such an Establishment throughout the Roman Empire;—had this empire—now reeling to and fro under every new military faction, or crumbling to pieces before the successive irruptions of fierce and barbarous hordes, thirsting for plunder and revenge; or dissolving under the luxury, and effeminacy, and general profligacy, of its degenerate inhabitants—been permanent, and able to maintain such a state of things, the corruptions of the Papacy, humanly speaking, had not taken place. Such an Establishment, however, he never had the honour of erecting. And hence the Papacy arose, with all its enormous abuses. Patronage itself, the greatest that remains to us, arose on the *deficient provision* of Constantine's Establishment.*

* "But our wonder will not cease here; it will rather be augmented, when we learn, that at this time it was looked upon as an essential part of religion to have, in every country, a multitude of churches. And here we must look for the true origin of what is called the Right of Patronage, which was introduced among Christians with no other view than to encourage the opulent to erect a great number of churches, by giving them the privilege of appointing the ministers that were to officiate in them. This was a new instance of that servile imitation of the ancient superstition which reigned at this time."—Mosh. vol. i. cent. iv. part ii. ch. iv. p. 394.

Christianity was long favoured or persecuted, by turns, by succeeding emperors.* The Bishops of Rome, aided by the superstition at one time of the multitude, at another time of a Roman noble, a Roman lady, or of a barbarian chief, and by many other concurring circumstances—but all on the Voluntary principle, or for which it had no remedy, and of all which they availed themselves with consummate dexterity, decision, boldness, and unwearied perseverance and vigilance—finally succeeded in usurping a domination, borne more reluctantly by princes and civil rulers than by their subject multitudes. In short, it was by the aid of the multitude more than of the State, that the Romish Church succeeded in usurping the tyranny over both. Fraud is the resource of weakness and cunning. Churchmen are, from their position and office, weak against human power. When actuated by corrupt motives they readily seek the aid of their nearest allies, and practise on the dispositions most likely to secure it. These they can most easily reach through the superstition naturally inherent in mankind—and through this medium did the Bishop of Rome acquire his greatest power, and most successfully resist the attempts of princes for its curtailment. Princes and States will never be able to prevent such an usurpation, unless on the principle of a Scriptural Establishment; an institution as beneficial to the people, and as necessary to secure their liberties, as it is to the

* Gibbon.

purity of the Church itself and the safety of the State.

The object of an Establishment is as much, be it observed, to prevent the exorbitant acquisition of ecclesiastical power and wealth, as to secure the support of a well distributed body of laborious teachers of religion. This object is happily attained by the principles of the Scottish Establishment; and because Roman emperors were not sufficiently wise, nor their government sufficiently secure, to give existence and permanency to such an institution, are we to be so insane as to throw away the mighty advantages we thus possess, and expose ourselves to the dangers of priestly intrigue and usurpation, because we may foolishly flatter ourselves it will be voluntary? This double object of securing a competency to the ministers of religion, and a supply of national instruction, while it prevents the dangerous ascendency of the priesthood, I have elsewhere said, seemed to me to be the object of the Jewish Establishment. It affords us a beautiful illustration of the Divine wisdom in that system which we often hear so flippantly styled a temporary theocracy, incapable of imitation, and destined to perish for ever. The theocracy was adventitious, and its outward machinery was destined to perish, and a more spiritual machinery was to be substituted in its stead; but the great moving principle was to remain—a principle no less true than adapted to the social condition of man in all ages—namely, that it is the

duty and the wisdom of all governments to make a properly regulated provision for the religion, and through it for the morals and general benefit, of their subjects. The above opinion of the object of the Jewish Establishment I find confirmed by Lowman, in his Dissertation on the Civil Government of the Hebrews—which has just fallen into my hands. "The rank of the priests and Levites," says he, "as ministers of religion, as the men of best understanding and knowledge in the laws, as of great interest in the nation, and influence in the administration of justice, might have proved too great a balance of power in one tribe, if they had retained with these advantages a considerable property in land, and an united independent government in themselves, as one of the tribes of Israel, according to the model of the other tribes or provinces.

"I cannot but look upon it as a wise intention, and *an original design*, in the constitution, appointed with great political skill, to cut off all possible abuse of such power and influence, as their character might give them. By these means they were deprived of all power to hurt the liberty of the other tribes, or any ways endanger the constitution by any ambitious views or projects; for not only all the estates of the Levites, but their persons too, were given into the hands of the other tribes as so many hostages, and as a security for their good behaviour. They were so separated from one another, that they could no way mutually

assist each other in any ambitious design. They were so dispersed among the other tribes, that it was absolutely in their power, upon any national quarrel, or even on a suspicion of any ill designs of the Levites, to put a stop to their whole livelihood, and seize on all their persons at once. You may hence perceive, that whatever power or influence the constitution gave the Levites to do good, the same constitution carefully provided to put it out of their power to do ill, either to disturb the peace or endanger the liberties of their country." *

It is important to observe, that all the reasonings of the friends of the Voluntary principle proceed on the idea that the clergy, if left to themselves, will necessarily remain incorrupt, humble, and poor, and that the people will not only supply their wants, but that they will never either be deceived by them, nor aid them in worldly and ambitious designs. The contrary of this idea is as much the testimony of history, as it is to be expected, from the ignorance, degeneracy, and superstition of human nature. At this moment Popery is supported in every country where it is dominant by the mutual dependence and union of the priests and of the multitude. Sometimes a civil despot may avail himself of both; but the more general way is, and always has been, that both usurp it over the civil power, to the corruption of all, and the degradation especially of the com-

* Pages 123, 124.

munity. The Church of Rome has always understood this well. The whole system is admirably fitted to avail itself of the weaknesses of degenerate humanity, and to work upon its superstitious fears. Through this medium the Church has compelled refractory kings to bow to her decision, and through this medium have haughty emperors been forced to put the neck under the foot of a domineering Pope, to hold his stirrup, and lead his mule, and to walk bare-headed and bare-footed, clothed in sackcloth, exposed to the elements, in the month of January, for days and nights, in the outer court of the Papal palace, while its owner was indulging in licentious dalliance.* Through this medium have the Papal coffers been replenished in every age, and indulgences, with all their enormities, made available. Men were never compelled to purchase indulgences. It was a voluntary imposition. Through this medium have swarms of begging monks successively gone forth, under new names, depending on voluntary aid, to promote the ambitious designs of the Papacy, to revive her decaying strength, and to subject to her sway the minds of men on every new emergency. Through the superstition and folly of men have her splendid marble domes been built, and her numberless gorgeous shrines enriched and beautified, with all that can captivate the senses, in painting, music, sculpture, and mosaics, in gold and silver, and precious stones. Through this medium she held

* Russel's Modern Europe, Letter xxiii. vol. i. p. 211.

in her chains the grave Spaniard, the vivacious Frank, the passionate Italian, the heavy Austrian, the lively Saxon, the patriotic Swiss, the brave Tyrolese, and made them pour into her lap their various tribute. With wonderful pliancy and foresight did she adapt herself to all the circumstances of society, and provide supplies for all the passions, necessities, and tastes of humanity. She had gorgeous splendour, and imposing state and forms, for the great; and abject poverty, and mortified sanctity, for the low; the fine arts for the man of taste and genius; scholastic subtlety for the acute and learned; puerile legends and marvels for the ignorant; retirement in rocks, and dens, and caves of the earth, for the ascetic; and pomp, and revelry, and gaudy show, for the devotees of vanity, idleness, and pleasure. All the passions, energies, and weaknesses of men were enlisted in her service and defence. Nothing was too lofty for her ambition, nothing too insignificant for her notice. She received with equal readiness the rich offering of the prince and the noble, and the crust of the peasant, or the mite of the mechanic. If they submitted to her will, she gave them indulgence on earth, and promised them happiness in heaven. If they resisted, she launched forth her anathemas, and princes trembled on their thrones, and nations were covered with mourning, having before their eyes utter desolation on earth, and eternal misery in the world of spirits. It was not through the constituted acts of governments, acting on the principle of an Establishment, but

through the skill, intrigue, and avarice of priests, practising on the interests, passions, and superstitions of kings, nobles, and peasants alike, under the influence of the Voluntary principle, that the Church acquired her power. It is not enough to tell us that a religion is the religion of the State, to make the Establishment principle answerable for its corruptions, unless it can be proved, not only that it was the State that gave it all its wealth, and that it would have remained in purity and poverty without its aid, but that this corruption arose from *our* principle. This can never be proved of the Church of Rome. The contrary is the truth, that it arose to power and wealth, in spite of the opposition of states and emperors, by arrogating independence, by grasping at every new accession of wealth, or power, or influence, from whatever quarter they might be derived, and retaining with tenacious grasp what it once acquired. In no Popish country would the priesthood have willingly submitted to have their voluntary property taken away, and an equal State provision accorded in its stead, and to which alone they should be confined. They knew well that they had a more abundant resource in their own ingenuity and the superstition of mankind.

These are not mere speculations; they are the facts confirmed by the testimony of history, and to this day verified by our own observation in Popish countries. We have no instances of even an approach to a regular national provision in the history of Popery at least for 400 years after Con-

stantine. We have found, that before the conversion of the Roman emperors, the Church had gradually acquired great wealth; and though, by this event, its wealth might be greatly enhanced, by the accession of new converts, it was so enhanced on the Voluntary principle, and went on, like every other evil, in a gradual but accumulating and accelerated progression. For a long period the emperors, instead of encouraging, endeavoured to repress, the power of the Roman bishop. "No sooner had Constantine fixed his residence to Byzantium, now Constantinople, than he and his successors laboured to have the bishop of their new capital equal in grandeur with the Romish."* This contest produced the most deplorable effects. The Roman triumphed at last over the Byzantine Bishop, not by the favour of the emperors, but in spite of it. Brown, writing of the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century, says, "The emperors, with their superior power, were a disagreeable check to them" (the patriarchs). "The patriarchs of Constantinople being enrolled next to the Roman, by the Council of 381, struggled for a perfect equality: the Council of Chalcedon exalted that see to a perfect equality with the Roman." This was opposed vehemently by Leo the Great of Rome, and his assistants; "but the Emperor supported the Council's decision." The contest still continued. The historian adds, "Circumstances mightily favouring the Roman, he at last prevailed."†

When the emperors opposed, the bishops strug-

* Brown, cent. iv. sect. iii. † Ibid. cent. v. sect. iii.

gled and contended. When the emperors were favourable or careless, the Roman prelate equally turned it to his advantage. Hence, says the same writer, "in the West, the emperors being indolent, or entangled with difficulties, left him to govern at Rome as he pleased. The barbarous nations, observing his *powerful influence, were desirous to have him their friend, in order to establish their power.*"* This influence he had not yet acquired by imperial favour, but in spite of it, or by imperial neglect and indolence. It was acquired from his position in the city of Rome, whose very name had almost a magic power. This is set forth, in very lively colours, by Villers, in the "Sketch of the History of the Church," appended to his Essay on the Reformation:—"If the patriarch of Constantinople had in his favour his more proximate residence to the Emperor, he had also against him the *vicinity of the court, which would not permit a priest to exalt himself too much.* The Roman pastors, on the contrary, had not so much to dread from this troublesome and dangerous neighbourhood of the imperial majesty, and of the intrigues of a court. He had in his favour the great name of Rome, before which nations were accustomed to bend. It is known that the translation of the government to Constantinople had no other effect than to weaken it, and that this second capital could never attain to the consideration of the first. The patriarch of Constantinople, therefore, could only be subordinate,

* Brown, cent. v. sect. iii.

in a city held itself in subordinacy; while his rival at Rome was allowed to perform the first character, in the first city of the world. To this may be added, that the people who subdued Rome and the West became Christians; while those who subdued Constantinople and all the East established the religion of Mahomet there. Is it, therefore, strange, if the Roman bishops, assisted by a skilful and persevering policy, at length prevailed over all the others? The magic of this name of Rome has fascinated almost all ages, and has reached ours, without having lost all the force of its charm." *

A very striking instance of the opposition of the emperors to the temporal aggrandisement of the bishops of Rome occurs in the case of Valentinian, so early as the year 370. By several Regulations, he prohibited voluntary testamentary gifts to the clergy, who had, to an enormous extent, abused their influence to enrich themselves and defraud the natural heirs, through the arts they practised on the great and wealthy, but superstitious citizens, especially ladies of Rome.† This subject is treated apparently with great justice, and on too good authority, by Gibbon, though with the evident satisfaction with which he delights to paint the vices and weaknesses of the clergy. This part of his history is well worthy of an attentive consideration, as clearly showing that a State interference is absolutely necessary, in course of time, to prevent

* Villers' Essay, pp. 314, 315.

† Father Paul's Treatise on Benefices, p. 14.

ecclesiastical wealth, and consequent domination arising from the natural superstition of mankind. His account is introduced by this remark—"*The strict regulations which have been framed by the wisdom of modern legislators*, to restrain the wealth and avarice of the clergy, may be originally deduced from the example of the Emperor Valentinian." After quoting the Theodosian Code in a note, the historian adds, "Godefrey (tom. vi. 49), after the example of Baronius, impartially collects all that the fathers have said on the subject of this important law, whose spirit was long afterwards revived by the Emperor Frederic II., Edward I. of England, and other Christian princes, who reigned after the twelfth century."* Such is the testimony of Gibbon to the danger of the Voluntary principle. He cannot be suspected of desiring to favour the clergy of an Established Church. He only speaks the language of history. "Charlemagne made a law to forbid the churches to receive any gifts which disinherited children and heirs."† Giannone, after enumerating various States which passed similar laws, and referring to his authorities, says, "There is not a province in Europe in which the princes do not acknowledge that it belongs to them, and to their authority, to furnish their States with similar provisions."‡ The wealth acquired by the Church, without the aid of the civil power,

* Gibbon, chap. xxv.

† Treatise on Benefices, p. 14, note.

‡ Giannone Storia di Napoli, lib. ii. c. viii. p. 415.

was not only a source of danger to the State, but, in consequence, as always will happen in such circumstances, made the State make improper attempts on the liberties of the Church. This is illustrated by the following testimony of Father Paul :—" But after the year 500, the bishops being become the absolute dispensers of the *fourth* part of the goods of the Church" (which goods, be it always remembered, were its own), " they began to employ more of their care on their temporal affairs, and to make parties in the cities; so that elections were no longer carried on with a view to the service of God, but managed by faction and intrigues, which often proceeded to open violence. This gave the first alarm to princes, who had hitherto little concerned themselves in the choice of the ministry; but when the holy men of those times began to declare that God had placed the Church under their protection, and that they were answerable by that divine commission to see that the affairs of the Church should be administered under regular and legal forms of its own, this opened the eyes of princes, and made them capable of discerning how much the interests of ambitious clergymen, and the seditious cabals formed on these occasions, to obtain the dignities of the Church, endangered the public peace and the interest of the civil government. Moved, therefore, partly by religious considerations, and partly by reasons of State, they now began not to suffer the clergy and the people to determine

elections by themselves, and according to their own passions."* Indeed, reasoning from the principles of human nature, its ambition on the one hand, and superstition on the other, we should have concluded that the interference of the State, by wise civil enactments, which cannot be permitted on the Voluntary principle, was absolutely necessary. History leads to the same conclusion.

I cannot help quoting one or two passages from Ambrose and Jerome, as furnished by Godfrey in his Commentary on the Law of Valentinian,† as they are so much in point, to show what horrible injustice and iniquity were, and may still be, practised on the Voluntary principle:—"Can we say, Nobody accuses us of rapacity;" (invasionis;) "no one charges us with violence? As if blandishments may not sometimes screw out of WIDOWS" [the capitals are not mine] "a greater prey than torments. There is no difference with God, whether any one seize another's property by violence or by circumvention, provided, by any means, he hold what is another's."‡ Hear the bitter words of Jerome:—"I blush to say, the priests of idols, players, and charioteers, and *scorta*, receive inheritances, while, by this law, a prohibition is laid only on clergy and monks; and that prohibition is laid, not by persecutors, but by

* Treatise on Benefices, chap. ix. p. 24.

† Cod. Theod. xvi. tit. ii. tom. vi.

‡ Ambrose, Ser. 7.

Christian princes. Nor do I complain of the LAW, but I grieve that we have DESERVED this law." * May the ministers of the Church of Scotland be preserved from ever being subjected to any temptation to such horrible baseness! Both Dissenters and Churchmen are preserved from it by a national provision. The Churchman has no temptation to it; and, from his presence, the Dissenter, though he were willing, dares not attempt it. About twenty years after, Theodosius, for the same reasons, was constrained to promulgate a similar law, forbidding the deaconesses to leave to the monks or clergy their property of any kind, or to the churches, or even to the poor. He afterwards relaxed this law so far as to permit them to leave their movables. † So far, then, was it from being the case, that the Church acquired its power and wealth from its civil connection—that this very connection was a severe check to it, in the expressive words of Godfrey, commenting on the law of Valentinian:—"Primum Imperatorem videmus non solum mores Ecclesiasticorum ad honestatem componentem sed et provida ac severa legis cautione Ecclesiasticorum adquisitionibus fibulam imponentem."—That is, "Thus we see the emperor not only regulating the morals of the clergy for decency, but, by a wise and severe law, putting a check (a clasp, or bit, as we would say) upon the acquisitions of ecclesiastics."

* Hier. Epist. 2 ad Nepot.

† See Cod. Theod. xvi. tom. vi. tit. ii. lxx. pp. 49, 50.

So great were the riches of the clergy, acquired by voluntary contributions, that the actual remedy proposed by Augustine for its abuses was a fixed allotment of the tithes, for which, for the welfare of religion, he was willing to give up his more profitable share of the property obtained by voluntary gifts.* There is no truth of history clearer than this, that the Romish Church acquired its wealth, not by civil aid, but in spite of it. *To assert the contrary, is to palm upon mankind as gross an imposition as any of the fabricated forgeries of Popish delusion and iniquity.* Hence, Father Paul observes, "that in spite of all the resistance and defence made by the princes and bishops against the attacks of the Church of Rome, she has never lost courage in the sharpest conflicts, or betrayed the least thought of desisting from her pretensions." † This will be farther illustrated as we proceed. Indeed, the great struggle of our Reformers, lay and clerical, was to establish the just power of the State against the arrogated power of the Church. The Church, on the other hand, contended against this doctrine. In the 'Index Expurgatorius,' all passages of books "that had the misfortune to maintain the authority given by God to princes" were expunged, to such an extent, as to make it almost impossible to discover the real opinions of their authors. ‡

It will not be necessary to enter into any minuté

* Father Paul's Treatise on Benefices, p. 16.
† Ibid. p. 153. ‡ Ibid. p. 179.

historical detail of the continued struggles and contests of the bishops of Rome against the emperors, and of the various stratagems they employed to defeat the imperial power, till they called in, for this purpose, the aid of Charlemagne, the Emperor of the West, in the eighth century: at which period, all historians date the permanent establishment of the Pope's temporal power.

Du Pin, in his Ecclesiastical History, though a Catholic, and of consequence naturally disposed to favour the claims of the popes, professedly shows "that all the temporal power they have obtained since, is owing to King Pepin and the Emperor Charlemagne." This he shows by a regular historical deduction, in which he proves that the popes were not only subject to the emperors, but "used somewhat roughly" by several sovereigns. "'Tis remarkable that this king (Theodoric, who reigned in the end of the fifth century) exercised his power over the Church of Rome and its bishops with so much haughtiness, that he appointed a visitor to this Church, and sent poor Pope John, being very sick, to the Greek Emperor, to obtain a revocation of the edict he had made against the Arians, *which John not being able to obtain*, Theodoric caused him to be imprisoned at Ravenna, where he died. Theodatus sent in like manner from Rome Pope Agapetus to the Emperor Justinian; and, when he became master of Italy, he used the popes no less roughly than Theodoric had done; for he exacted of them great

sums of money to confirm their ordination, and caused the Popes Silverus and Vigilius to be carried to Constantinople, where he made them approve the restoration of Anthimus to the patriarchal see of that city. Martin the First was also banished to the province of Pontus, by the exarch of Ravenna, according to the orders he had received from the Emperor. Justinian the Younger banished also Pope Sergius. In short, the Emperor Leo Isauricus would have put to death Pope Gregory the Second," &c.—The Lombard kings, quarrelling with the popes, and having stripped them of their possessions, they applied for aid to the emperors, who not being able or willing to give it, Pope Stephen applied to Pepin, King of the French, "who, coming to besiege Pavia, forced King Astolphus to sue for peace, which was granted him upon condition that he should *not only restore* to the Church of Rome all the lands and territories which he had possessed in Italy, but also yield up the exarchate of Ravenna, and the cities of the Roman Duchy." This peace was soon broken. Pepin again interfered, and again "*restored*," with additions, the exarchate of Ravenna "unto the hands of the popes," and refused to yield it to the Greek Emperor, when demanded by his ambassador. Pepin once more interfered for the Church; but, dying in the meantime, Desiderius attempting to obtain the property of the Church, "Pope Adrian implored the aid of Charlemagne, who came with a

great army, defeated Desiderius, and shut him up in Pavia. From thence Charles went to Rome, and *restored* to the Pope all the estates which the Roman Church had possessed in Italy. In consideration of which benefits, Adrian, as head of the Roman Republic, granted him, with the consent of the people of Rome, the title of Patricius, and gave him the sovereignty over the city and all the Republic of Rome, insomuch that all the people, and even the bishop himself, took an oath of allegiance to him." Giannone, treating of the same events, enumerates several places which Charles ("fece restituire") made be restored. Besides, in return for his favours, Charlemagne was "consecrated and crowned emperor by the Pope." This was no small matter, in a superstitious age, that reverenced the Bishop of Rome, and the name of Rome itself, to a man that had arrived at empire by usurpation, or, at least, had not a hereditary right. It is singular that Napoleon, more than a thousand years thereafter, knowing the power of superstition in the human mind, still endeavoured to obtain the same sanction to his usurpation of Emperor of the West, not content with merely acquiring the "iron crown" by the power of the sword.

The historian then proceeds to observe, that the "popes began to lay, by little and little, the foundations of their sovereign dominion." And while they contended, at one time with the people of Rome, and at another with the emperors, both of the East and

of Germany, "at last the popes got the better on't, and remained sole masters and sovereigns of Rome, and the countries about it." "All that we have said concerning the foundation and growth of the Pope's power, plainly shows that the *settlement* of their empire is not owing to Constantine, but to the kings of France."* "The very donations which had been made to the churches from time to time, in the course of two centuries, *not less by private persons*" (non men da' private) "than princes, were the cause that the churches, not less than princes and private persons, had their patrimonies. The very ample possessions which they acquired, not only in the district of their cities, but in distant countries, from whence they drew their revenues and fruits, they denominated 'patrimonies,' as family inheritances were called in the usage of these times. The Church of Rome had such patrimonies in the remotest countries of Europe."†

It may be here observed, in passing, that all these regal and imperial gifts were strictly on the Voluntary principle, and not in the remotest degree on the principle of an Establishment. They were purely the result of party interest or ambition, which the Voluntary principle not only had no power to prevent, but which naturally sprung out of it, in connection with the depravity of human nature.

Villers, in the Appendix to his Essay, gives the same account of the matter, and attributes the gift

* Du Pin's Eccl. Hist., article Constantine.

† Giannone Storia di Nap. lib. iv. cap. 12, sec. iv. pp. 298, 299.

of Pepin to his obligations to the Pope, "*who had assisted him in preserving his crown.*" And again, speaking of his successor, Charlemagne, he says, "But the prince, who had exalted the Pope so high, died; and with him ceased the vigour and judgment *necessary to restrain them, and hinder them* from rising still higher."*

The same struggles for superiority and advancement on the part of the popes, and of constant opposition on the part of princes, continued to the period of the Reformation, and even down to the last century. It will be unnecessary to enter into any detail. The popes, by gradual and successive aggrandisement, arrived at a pitch of power and influence by which they became both useful and formidable to kings and emperors. And in barbarous and unsettled times, the parties would naturally act according to their views and interests.

"The true creed of the Roman see was to convert every circumstance, whether political or religious, to advantage, for the increase of its power and consequence."† The observation of another historian is equally just. Russel, in tracing the rise of the Pope's temporal power, says, "To free themselves from the dominion of the Greek emperors, without falling a prey to the kings of Italy, was the great object of these ambitious prelates. In order to accomplish this important purpose, they employed with success both religion and intrigue."‡ It was

* Villers, p. 317. † Villers.

‡ Modern Europe, 5 vol. i. p. 3, Letter vi.

with this view that the Pope called in the aid of the French sovereigns Pepin and the Charleses. In the various agitations of these times, the general policy of the popes was to call in the aid of a distant sovereign, rather than one near at hand, whose presence might have been an inconvenient restraint upon their power. And thus they preferred at one time a French to a German emperor; and at another, a German was deemed preferable to an Italian sovereign. When protection was absolutely necessary, they courted the more distant.* The civil power was always the greatest object of their terror, and the most formidable enemy to their usurped dominion.

For this dominion there was no possible prevention or remedy in the principle of Voluntary Churches. In truth, there had hitherto, so far as history testifies, been no other principle in operation. We have as yet no such thing as a general Establishment, by a regular State endowment, on any such principle as that of our Established Church. And unless such can be pointed to, and the corruptions of the Church traced to it, all arguments against a Church Establishment from this source are perfectly nugatory. It is no less astonishing that they have ever been listened to, than that one who *should* be acquainted with history, should have ventured to bring them forward.

Villers, fully aware that the power of the popes was acquired through a succession of concurring

* Miller's Phil. of Hist. vol. ii. p. 192.

causes, artfully and perseveringly turned to their advantage, even in opposition to the civil powers, says, "But in proportion as the claims of the see of Rome were raised, they could not fail to make the princes who were invested with the imperial dignity, averse to the rights to which these claims were principally directed. Then began long and obstinate dissensions between the emperors of Germany and the popes. These excommunicated, anathematised, and deposed the emperors, and *stirred up and excited their own people* and other princes, both Germans and foreigners, against them. The emperors revenged themselves by arms; they imprisoned and deposed the popes, and created anti-popes," &c. "In this struggle the temporal princes had everything to lose, and the popes nothing." * "It was principally by means of these" (false speculative notions) "that superstition had established its empire over the minds of men; behind them the Romish ecclesiastics had entrenched themselves, and defended their usurped prerogatives and possessions; and had any prince or legislature endeavoured to deprive them of these while the great body of the people remained unenlightened, it would soon have been found that the attempt was premature in itself, and replete with danger to those by whom it was made." †

Such must be the conclusions drawn by every man who attentively examines the history of the

* Villers, p. 332.

† M'Crie's Life of Knox, vol. i. p. 25.

rise of Popery. It is a very short process to attribute all its enormities to the principle of an Established Church. Had Constantine's Establishment been their cause and origin, it is somewhat singular that the Bishop of Rome, whom the Greek emperors depressed, and to whom we do not find they even were munificent in temporary gifts, should have risen to the Papal supremacy and power, while the Bishop of Constantinople, the seat of the imperial court, never arrived at any such dominion. It is much easier, however, and serves the purposes of party much better, to attribute the accumulating corruptions of fifteen centuries, and of various nations, to Constantine, than to search the records of history, and deduce from them the simple truth. In fact, they are no more to be attributed to Constantine than to Dioclesian, under both of whom the Church was wealthy, corrupt, and quarrelsome. Gibbon knew this when he said, "Before the ruin of Paganism in Rome, the competition for a wealthy bishopric had often been productive of tumult and bloodshed." Even the expedient that seemed to have occupied the mind of Dr Wardlaw, of keeping the empire Pagan, to prevent the revelation of the man of sin, would soon have failed, when the empire fell to pieces under the weight of its own corruptions, and the arms of the northern barbarians.

It might be very interesting to trace the real causes of the Pope's supremacy. This would require more time and space, and possibly learning, than I can now give it. No small influence is to

be attributed to the magic name of Rome itself,* the wealth of its citizens, and the reverence of multitudes of nations for the mistress of the world. The fathers of the Council of Chalcedon assigned as a reason for yielding the episcopal primacy to Rome, that of its primacy in the empire: *Δια το βασιλευειν την πολιν.* If any one cause is to be sought for, it is the ignorance and superstition of mankind, which rushed in like a flood about the period of the dissolution of the Roman Empire, and of which that dissolution was one great cause.

Bacon, who seemed possessed of a sagacity as capable of foreseeing the general results to future ages of past events and principles, as of fixing on their origin and causes, saw clearly this effect, as indicated by the following passage:—"The master of superstition is the people, and in all superstition wise men follow fools, and arguments are fitted to practice in a reversed order. The causes of superstition are, pleasing and sensual rites and ceremonies; excess of outward and pharisaical holiness; *over-great reverence of traditions*, which cannot but load the Church; the *stratagems of prelates* for their own ambition; the following too much of good intentions, which openeth the gates to conceits and novelties; the taking an aim at divine matters by human, which cannot but breed mixture of imaginations; and lastly, barbarous times, *especially joined with calamities and disasters.*" That master mind has, in these few words, pointed to the true sources

* Villers, p. 329.

of Romish superstition, and through it, of Romish domination.

The truth is, however unpalatable it may be, the real cause of the corruptions of the Church is the superstition of the people (by people, I mean prince, noble, and peasant alike), which voluntarily fed and pampered the ecclesiastical dependents of their bounty: and as it was with the great that the exaltation of the clergy must have soonest been felt to be an interference and encroachment, they first struggled against it, while the people stood up in its defence. "The master of superstition is the people."

Before illustrating this with a few historical testimonies, I may illustrate the other position of Bacon, That one cause of superstition is "barbarous times, especially joined with calamities and disasters." This cause operated to a fearful extent in the early history of the Church, and its effects extended down through the whole period of the dark ages.

About the period that Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, it seems to have been the only principle that tended to delay its total dissolution, and to bind together for a time its immense, but now almost disjointed fragments. Corrupted as Christianity then was, it restored some degree of public and private virtue to its emperors, who had so long before been the monsters of every vice. It offered some kind of uniting principle to the swarms of fierce invaders that rushed down from the forests and fastnesses of

northern regions. But itself suffered dreadfully, alike from their desolating fury and their barbarian favours. The Roman Empire, by this time groaning under its own weight, enfeebled by its corruptions, sunk in effeminacy, and torn by contending military factions, offered a tempting prey to the fierce warriors of the frozen north or burning south, who seemed suddenly to awake from their torpor, and, animated by the demon of fury and the lust of plunder, rushed forth to satiate their avarice, and amply to avenge mankind on the tyrants who had so long enslaved them. "Wherever they marched, their route was marked with blood. They ravaged or destroyed all around them. They made no distinction between what was sacred and what was profane. They respected no age, or sex, or rank. What escaped the fury of the first inundation, perished in those which followed it."—"Famine and pestilence, which always march in the train of war when it ravages with such inconsiderate cruelty, raged in every part of Europe, and completed its sufferings. If a man were called upon to fix upon the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most calamitous and afflicted, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Theodosius the Great, to the establishment of the Lombards in Italy."*

The heart sickens at the detail of these desolations and cruelties, and recoils from them with horror. Those who wish to have their minds thoroughly

* Robertson's View of the State of Europe.

informed on the subject, may consult ancient records. They will be aided by Gibbon—the Notes to Robertson's View—and may have some faint idea of them from the terrible appellations assigned to the leaders in these devastations; such as "Scourge of God," "Destroyer of nations." The effect of these irruptions upon religion was most pernicious. The old inhabitants were almost exterminated. The barbarians nominally adopted the religion of the conquered, no doubt influenced by their superior refinement and civilisation. But they ingrafted upon it the whole mass of their superstitions. "The barbarous nations, when converted to Christianity, changed the object, not the spirit of their religious worship. They endeavoured to conciliate the favour of the true God, by means not unlike to those which they had employed in order to appease their false deities." *

The same view is taken by Russel, who, speaking of the "barbarous superstition" of the northern invaders, says, "Which, mingling itself with the Christian principles and ceremonies, *produced that absurd mixture of violence, devotion, and folly, which has so long disgraced the Romish Church*, and which formed the character of the Middle Ages. The clergy were gainers, but Christianity was a loser, by the conversion of the barbarians. They rather changed the object than the spirit of their religion." † They had been accustomed to yield

* Robertson's View of the State of Europe, p. 22.

† Russel's Modern Europe, vol. i. letter xxii. p. 185.

the most absolute submission to their Pagan priests. They carried the same spirit into their Christianity —greedily adopted its already existing corruptions in doctrine and practice, which had long been great, and brought an immense accession of new ones to the already overloaded Church. Under these it gradually sunk into the universal torpor of the dark ages—a torpor and darkness relieved only by the contentions and struggles of warlike chiefs and steel-clad priests, who sometimes ventured to assume other arts than deception and intrigue against their powerful depredators, to advance their secular wealth and ambition. Chaos seemed again to have resumed its sway over the earth.

One great cause assigned by Robertson for the increased corruption of the Middle Ages, strange as it may seem to those who prefer the readier mode of simply referring them all to Constantine, was the scarcity of books. "To the obvious causes of such universal ignorance, arising from the state of government and manners, from the seventh to the eleventh century, we may add the scarcity of books during that period, and the difficulty of rendering them more common." The causes and proofs of this scarcity are then given. It was not removed till the invention of paper-making in the eleventh century.*

These and similar causes will account for the abject superstition and consequent corruptions of the Romish Church, "and all the ignorance and

* View of Europe, note x.

barbarism of the dark ages," without having recourse, with Dr Wardlaw, to the more compendious method of attributing it to the principle of an Establishment. Such a notion, I will venture to say, was never the result of a patient examination of history. Every one who examines it with a view to this question, will come to the very opposite conclusion, namely, that they arose from the want of a properly-established alliance between the Church and State, by which the Church, availing itself of the superstition of mankind, gradually overwhelmed with its usurped dominion states and rulers, and professed an independence derived from Heaven, and arrogated a right to dispose of crowns and kingdoms at its pleasure. What else than the clear knowledge of this state of things induced kings to oppose the voluntary gifts of superstition, and the leaders, both lay and clerical, of our glorious Reformation to *establish* the Protestant religion, on an enlightened basis, in these lands? They saw that it was the only way of preventing the recurrence of such abuses; and the superiority of our churches, even as they are, compared with the churches of the primitive ages, shows the wisdom of their scheme, and the design of Providence, that government, the "ordinance of God," should make its first object the welfare of His Church, established on earth, to bring about the temporal, as well as eternal, welfare of man.

Having thus pointed at the general causes that more fully developed and fostered, in the dark

ages, the superstition naturally inherent in the human mind, I shall now point to a few facts in history, illustrative of the truth of Bacon's saying, "The master of superstition is the people."

In this I shall confine myself to a short allusion to two points; namely—the institutions of the monks—and the support given to the Church by the people, in opposition to princes.

We have already seen that the monastic orders had existed, and become very numerous long before the age of Constantine. Their whole character, principles, and habits, were well calculated to impose upon the superstitious multitude. They affected extraordinary sanctity and poverty, and depended for their support solely on the alms of the pious. They increased in great swarms, and under new names and regulations, according to the characters and circumstances of the people whom they wished to subject to their sway. Poor at first, they gradually acquired great wealth, and became proportionally corrupt. New orders were instituted for their reform, when their vices became too scandalous and flagrant; but the object was always to advance the power of the Church over the minds of the superstitious. A similar class abounded in Egypt and Palestine before the spread of Christianity. Anthony, commonly called the founder of the Christian order, saw himself, before the time of Constantine, at the head of numerous followers, and the subject of unbounded admiration to the people. His name is still adored at Rome,

and numerous devotees come to his shrine; and we have seen cardinal, prince, and peasant, bring their horses to receive his blessing, at the church dedicated to his honour in the eternal city.

In 370 the monastic orders were established in Gaul. "The progress of the monks was not less rapid or universal than that of Christianity itself." "They were respected, and almost adored, by the prince and people." *

"In the East armies might have been formed out of their order, without any sensible diminution of their enormous multitude." In the West they were no less numerous. They "took part in political cabals, imposed frantic rites and ceremonies to blind the poor people, and laboured to swell the arrogance and enlarge the authority of the Roman Pontiff. They persuaded the people, who were now ignorant and superstitious enough to believe anything senseless, that remission of sin was to be purchased by liberalities to the Church and the monks."—"As the riches of the Church increased, so did the clerical enormities; and hence so many decrees of councils and *civil laws* were enacted to restrain them. But so prevalent was the tide of corruption, that the effect of these laws was scarce discernible. Nay, such was *the people's stupid veneration for the clergy*, that their most flagitious, scandalous, and even unnatural crimes, were but slightly punished." "It can hardly be imagined with what

* Gibbon, chap. xxxvii.

solemnity and liberality this silly Pontiff distributed his wonder-working relics, or with what *eagerness the people received them.*" *

"It is to their (the monks') base adulation that the Papal power owed its rapid progress throughout the West." They became so numerous, even in the fifth century, that the emperors thought fit to publish edicts to suppress them. †

It would be useless to trace the influence and power of the monks lower down, to show that they were great promoters of the power of the Church, and that their own power was founded in the superstition of the multitude.

We find the same superstition enabling the popes to carry it over the opposition of emperors and kings. One of the most remarkable instances is in the celebrated dispute about the worship of images, which was productive of such violent and continued contests.—"A question of popular superstition," says Gibbon, "produced the revolt of Italy, the temporal power of the popes, and the restoration of the Roman Empire in the West." The Emperor Leo Isauricus, by various means, endeavoured to suppress the worship of images, now grown to an enormous height by gradual advances from before the time of Constantine. "The Italians swore to live and die in behalf of the Pope and the holy images." A revolt was the consequence. The party of the Pope triumphed, and

* Brown, cent. vi. sect. iii.

† Formey, cent. vii. and v.

to secure their victory, called in the aid of Pepin and of Charles.*

The Church continually availed itself of the same superstition in succeeding times. After recounting the humiliation of Charles the Bald in France, in the ninth century, the historian of modern Europe, in a spirit of apparent bitterness and indignation at human degeneracy, says, "We may safely conclude, from the abject language of Charles, in publicly acknowledging the right of the bishops to depose him, and other examples of a similar nature, that the usurpations of the clergy were, in a great measure, occasioned by the *slavish superstition of the laity*, equally blind, wicked, and devout." † The popes, by inflicting punishment on the superstitious crowd, through them commanded the abject submission of a rebellious or reluctant prince. An instance of this kind is related by Mariana, of James, King of Arragon, who by their means was brought to submit to a heavy rebuke in the presence of the bishops, and to receive pardon on his knees. ‡ Father Paul greatly commends the general prudence of the Spanish kings, who rather submitted to the Pope, than contended with him, as others had done.

* Gibbon, chap. xlix.

† Vol. i. letter x. p. 83.

‡ "Ditione universa sacris interdicta, ut fere peccata Principum multitudinis malo vindicantur, regem diris omnibus defixum anathematis ignominia notavit. . . . . Rex verbis gravissimis castigatus, atque in genua procumbens, criminis venia donatus est ea lege," &c.—Marianæ Hist. de rebus Hispaniæ, lib. xiii. cap. vi.

"These saw evidently that it was the high road to subjection, and to lose all; seeing the demand of the Pope was not an end of his pretensions, but a step to much greater." *

It was the same abject superstition that enabled the popes of succeeding times to humble the able, warlike, and spirited Henry II., alike with the pusillanimous John, of England, when their subjects trembled under the terrors of excommunication. The priests themselves knew this well, and acted upon it. This is curiously illustrated by a correspondence of Arnulph, Bishop of Lesieux, with Thomas à Becket, in which, in estimating the strength of parties, he reminds the ambitious Churchman where his best support lay. "But all others, who stand in *inferior places*, embrace your person with the arms of sincere charity, imploring with deep but silent sighs, that the spouse of the Church may second your wishes, to the glory of His name, with a happy issue. Indeed their compassion ought to be most grateful to us," &c. † Hence their incredible respect and attention to the poor, and the numerous artifices, and sometimes costly largesses, to secure their good opinion. Any one who has gone into a Catholic country, and observed the crowds of poor fed at the convent doors, and in the hospitals for distant pilgrims, the protection given to their vices and their crimes, and the provision made for popular

* Treatise on Benefices, chap. xxiv. p. 105.

† British Magazine, Feb. 1833, p. 141.

amusements and superstitions, must have perceived how well the priesthood have estimated this source of their strength.

The same superstition of the people opposed the ecclesiastical reforms of the Emperor Joseph of Austria. It upheld the Pope's authority in the free cities of Italy. It, at this moment, upholds the usurper Miguel of Portugal—the sway of the Irish priests—and promotes the divisions of the Southern States of America. Infidelity and reckless innovation will not secure against it. They prepare the way for its return. If we consult the history of past ages, and survey the happiness of our own country since the principles of the Reformation were established among us, we shall not readily give in to the notion that a properly regulated State interference *about* the external affairs of the Church is either useless or pernicious; but, on the contrary, we must be convinced that it is highly necessary and beneficial. If the lessons of history are of any weight, statesmen would do right to understand this subject well, and to guard against dangerous innovations, because they *seem* to promise a ready and a speedy release from immediate difficulties. Let it be remembered that it was by arrogating a total independence of the State that the Papal power consummated its domination.

Thus far I had proceeded in the plan and execution of this Essay, when I obtained, for the first time, a sight of Hallam's History of the Middle

Ages—and I am struck with the similarity of the views forced upon him by the deductions of history. I had intended to show the effect of the superior learning of the clergy, and other circumstances, in acquiring personal respect and judicial power in a dark age—but shall, in the meantime, give some short extracts from the author just mentioned, who did not write with the *view* of showing the unsoundness of the Voluntary principle, or the error of dating the corruptions of the Church to its Establishment under Constantine, but certainly leads us to this conclusion.

In his very admirable chapter, entitled, "History of Ecclesiastical Power during the Middle Ages," he states as follows :—"At the irruption of the Northern invaders into the Roman Empire, they found the clergy already endowed with extensive possessions. Besides the spontaneous oblations, upon which the ministers of the Christian Church had originally subsisted, they had obtained, *even under the Pagan emperors*, by concealment or connivance —for the Roman law did not permit a tenure of lands in mortmain—certain immoveable estates, the revenues of which were applicable to their own maintenance, and that of the poor."* Constantine gave a legal sanction to these estates; in other words, did not grant them, but allowed them to retain them. "The Edict of Milan, in 313, recognises the actual *estates of ecclesiastical corporations.*" † Constantine was yet a Pagan. He then speaks of the pernicious liberality of Constantine

* Hallam, Mid. Ages, chap. vii. part i. † Ibid.

and some of his successors :—" Covetousness, especially, became almost a characteristic vice. Valentinian I., in 370, *prohibited the clergy* from receiving the bequests of women; a modification more discreditable than any general law could have been. And several of the fathers severely reprobate the prevailing avidity of their contemporaries."

This wealth of the Church, he shows, was increased after the subversion of the empire; the invaders retained "the elementary principles of their own and of all barbarous idolatry, a superstitious reverence for the priesthood, a credulity that seemed *to invite imposture*, and a confidence in the efficacy of gifts to expiate offences." The clergy adapted their creed and ritual to such devotees. "A creed thus contrived, operating upon the minds of barbarians, lavish, though rapacious, and devout, though dissolute, naturally caused a torrent of opulence to pour in upon the Church. Donations of land were continually made to the bishops, and, in still more ample proportion, to the monastic foundations." * It is surely more from ignorance than covetousness, that certain parties in our day long for the return of these good Voluntary days—to which our moderate Establishment presents such a barrier.

"*The ecclesiastical hierarchy never received any territorial endowment by law, either under the Roman Empire, or the kingdoms erected upon its ruins. But the* VOLUNTARY *munificence of princes, as well as*

* Hallam, Mid. Ages, chap. vii. part i.

their subjects, amply supplied the place of a more universal provision. Large private estates, or, as they were termed, patrimonies, not only within their own dioceses, but sometimes in distant countries, sustained the dignity of the principal sees, and especially that of Rome." The historian then goes on to show the means, sometimes fair and sometimes foul, by which the clergy acquired their wealth—but still on the Voluntary principle. The above three sentences, founded, as we have already shown, on ancient documents, are entirely fatal to the argument against Establishments from Constantine and the Church of Rome. The argument from this source is clearly in the favour of a proper Establishment. Hallam, in a note, gives a curious instance of an Italian count, who, having consulted certain religious how he might best atone for his crimes, was advised to consecrate his substance to the monastery, which he gladly did: "Hoc consilium ab iis libenter, et *ardentissimo* animo ego accepi."* The best security against such imposition is a sound national creed, and a moderate provision for the clergy.

In proof of what I had formerly given as an opinion, in remarking on Mr Douglas, that the clergy might have great wealth on the Voluntary principle, and yet there be no proper division for general instruction, Hallam says, "As an additional source of revenue, and in imitation of the Jewish law, the payment of tithes was recommended or enjoined. These, however, were not

* Hallam, Mid. Ages, chap. vii. part i.

applicable *at first to the payment of a resident clergy.* Parochial divisions, as they now exist, did not take place, at least in some countries, *till several centuries after the Establishment* of Christianity." Charlemagne, by a *civil interference*, brought this about to a certain extent. But this was hardly the case in England till near the time of the Conquest. It is added in a note—"Muratori Dissert. 74, and Fleury, Institutions au Droit Ecclesiastique, tom. i. p. 162, refer the origin of parishes to the fourth century; but this must be limited to the *most populous parts* of the empire;"*—proving the necessity of a national provision for the poorer districts—a thing, indeed, which does not require proof. It may be added that the very name of Pagans, pagani, or villagers, arose from the deficiency of religious instruction in the country, by which the inhabitants remained heathen, when those of more favoured spots were converted. A parochial Establishment was the most obvious remedy for this deficiency. The evidence on this point is adduced by Hallam for a different purpose than I adduce it—namely, to prove the non-antiquity of the civil right to tithes in the Christian Church. He shows that there was an opposition to this impost, though enforced by ecclesiastical councils, and by the *sermons of the clergy;*† adding, "This reluctant

* Hallam, Mid. Ages, chap. vii. part i.

† "A preacher in the time of Charlemagne informed his audience that they ought not only to pay tithes to the priests, but to carry them to their houses." These were the bright days of Voluntary Churches. See "Treatise on Benefices," chap. xi. p. 37. From the

submission of the people to a general and permanent tribute is perfectly consistent with the eagerness displayed by them in accumulating Voluntary donations on the Church. Charlemagne was the first who gave a *civil* confirmation to these ecclesiastical statutes. But it would be precipitate to infer, either that the practice had not already gained ground, to a considerable extent, through the influence of *ecclesiastical authority;* or, on the other hand, that it became universal, in consequence of the commands of Charlemagne." In a note, our author says, "The grant of Ethelwolf, in 855, seems to be the most probable origin of the right to tithes in England." Whether this law, for such it was, met with constant regard, is another question. "It is said by Mariana, that tithes were not legally established in Castille till the reign of Alfonzo X." * Alfonzo died in the year 1280.†

It is thus proved, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the riches, and consequent corruptions and power of the Romish Church, did not owe their rise to a State endowment, but to Voluntary credulity and liberality—to which the only possible

same authority (page 114) we learn that, in the year 1195, the Pope ordered payment of tithes, not only of all kinds of fruits and merchandise, but "of soldier's pay, hunting, and windmills. But the Canonists have gone much farther, affirming that the poor who beg about the streets are obliged to pay the tenth of all the alms they get, and common women likewise a part of their infamous gain." With more to the same purpose in chap. xxix. page 116.

* Hallam, Mid. Ages, chap. vii. part i. Ensayo Sobre las siete Partidas, c. 359.

† Miller's Philosophy of Modern History.

check was, or could have been, civil interference about the affairs of the Church. And this interference the Voluntary principle rejects, as did the Romish priesthood, when their usurpation had so far succeeded as to enable them to do it with impunity. The words of Father Paul may be justly applied to this principle :—" That which has placed the yoke on the neck of Christianity has taken away the means of shaking it off.* It is singular to find Wickliff contending against the Church of Rome on the same ground, and boldly lifting up his solitary testimony against the power and riches which she acquired, to use his favourite expression, by "*alms*," and advocating the right of the State to curtail her overgrown wealth. It has been thought his doctrine led to the encouragement of spoliation by the civil power,† though the truth seems to be that, being a determined enemy of the mendicant orders and the eleemosynary system, he only advocated the right, nay, the duty, of the State to step in and check and regulate enormities for which there is no other remedy. Whatever was his opinion of the power of the State, it is clear he saw that the Church's wealth was obtained on the Voluntary scheme, and that some civil interference was necessary to remedy the evils it had produced.‡

* "Ma chi ha messo il Christianismo sotto il giogo gli ha, in fine, levato il modo di scuoterlo dal collo."—Historia del concilio Tridentino, p. 325.

† Hallam, vol. ii. chap. vii. part ii.

‡ Life of Wickliff, by Le Bas. London, 1832. Pp. 193, 194, 361-363.

It may be proper to observe here, that the right we advocate for the State, is not a right to interfere for spoliation, but a duty either to originate a provision, or to make such a distribution of that already obtained for the support of true religion, as shall best secure its inestimable blessings to every member of the community. When the religious instruction of the community is thus provided for, I shall not dispute her right to dispose of the remainder in any way that is most for the public benefit.

There were certain drawbacks to clerical acquisition, in their physical weakness, and in the rapacity and robbery of the fierce and barbarous nobles, whose lust of plunder often overcame their superstition, and led them to lay violent hands on the property of the comparatively defenceless Churchmen. The approach of death often produced a reaction in favour of the Church, and the fears of superstition refunded, with interest, what rapacity had seized. And though the Church was subject to occasional spoliation, the substratum of her wealth, the superstition of the multitude, remained, and in the long run she was the gainer. Charles Martel was ranked among these spoliators of the yet comparatively feeble ecclesiastics. To refund what he had rapaciously seized and granted to his soldiers, Charlemagne granted the tithes, for the first time, by civil enactments. "If it had not been for these drawbacks the clergy must, one would imagine, have almost acquired the exclusive property of the soil. They did enjoy,

according to some authorities, nearly one half of England, and, I believe, a greater proportion in some countries of Europe."* In Scotland, full one-half of the wealth of the nation was in the hands of the clergy—even of a few individuals, who commanded the whole body: and all this wealth was acquired by superstition.† They came to their zenith in the twelfth century. "After that time, the disposition to enrich the clergy by pious donations grew more languid, and was put under certain regal restraints." "The vast acquisitions of landed wealth, made for many ages by bishops, chapters, and monasteries, began at length to excite the jealousy of sovereigns."———"Prohibitions of gifts in mortmain, though unknown to the lavish devotion of the new kingdoms, had been established by some of the Roman emperors, to check the overgrown wealth of the hierarchy."‡ We have already alluded to these prohibitions, and shown, from Giannone, that they were found necessary in all the countries of Europe. And it is singular that these prohibitions were *not in the form of repeals of civil enactments in favour of the Church*, for such had never been made, but *acts of self-defence against a Voluntary usurpation.*

Civil Jurisdictions.—Another source of clerical abuse, and that by which the Pope became at last supreme arbiter of Europe, nay, of the world, setting himself to the nations "in the place of

* Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. c. vii. part. i. ‡ Ibid.

† M'Crie's Life of Knox, vol. i. pp. 14, 15.

God,"—was the right of deciding in civil causes. This is a very important, but difficult and complex subject; and would require much space, patience, and investigation, for its full elucidation. This power, like the Church's wealth, seems to have been acquired by Voluntary reference to the arbitration of the clergy; an arbitration recommended in the Epistle to the Corinthians, because then the judges of the earth were Pagan; but never intended to be perpetual, or to usurp the civil power. Nay, in fact, it was not directed to be made to the clergy, but to qualified members of the Church. It gradually, however, grew up into custom, sometimes permitted, but oftener prohibited, by the civil power. For many centuries, it was a privilege granted to ecclesiastics only; but it was never the result of civil enactment forced upon the Church, but rather usurped by the Church upon the State, and supported by the forgeries of the dark ages. On this subject, I beg to translate a passage from Giannone. After showing, with great clearness, that the Scriptures nowhere grant judicial civil power to priests, as such, he says, "Nor in these three first centuries, as is seen in the first book (except in three spiritual cases previously mentioned), had the priests this ample authority, in disputed causes, which they have at present. Nor had they it in the fourth or fifth century: for although the empire was governed by Christian emperors, except in taking cognisance of ecclesiastical causes

alone, they were judged, both in civil and criminal cases, by the secular magistrates, and themselves even regarded as members of civil society; and no immunity or exemption of any kind having been granted to them, neither by divine right, nor, till then, by the laws of any prince, they must, in consequence, have been judged by secular magistrates in secular causes." He then enumerates a great variety of cases, in which, during these times, they were brought before the civil tribunals; and then goes on to say, "In the extravagant and apocryphal title *De Episcopali Judicio*, which was placed in a suspected place, that is, in the very end of the Theodosian Code, there is a constitution of Valentinian, Theodosius, and Arcadius, by which it appears that there is given to the bishops the cognisance of causes between ecclesiastics; and, in like manner, that they may not be drawn to plead elsewhere than before themselves. But though such law is supposititious, as Godfrey shows at great length, and all the learned hold for certain, nevertheless, the priests could draw nothing from it; since, in express and precise words, it is treating only of ecclesiastical causes, the cognisance of which was always competent to the Church; these are the words—*Quantum ad causas tamen Ecclesiasticas pertinet.*" He then speaks of other constitutions, proved equally false to us by Du Pin; "who demonstrates to us, better than any other, that the clergy, as well in civil and political as in criminal causes, were not by divine right

exempt from secular authority, neither from tribute nor from punishments; but that, in the lapse of time, by the favour of emperors and of princes, in *some cases* they acquired immunity, which will be clearly seen in the course of this history." *

The same author shows that Justinian was the first that granted a civil jurisdiction to the clergy, extending only to their own order, but yet permitting appeal to the ordinary magistrate. And though the sentence of degradation from office by an ordinary judge, could not be executed against a clergyman without the consent of the bishop; yet, if he refused, recourse could be had to the emperor. †

The same account is given by the historian of the Council of Trent. He shows the scriptural origin of what he calls, "La caritativa correttione;" and that it was exercised not by the pastor only, but by the congregation and presbytery, down to the year 250. The people, experiencing the goodness and charity of the bishops, gradually left it them, and "ambition, a very subtle passion, which creeps in under the appearance of virtue, made them promptly embrace it. When persecutions ceased, the change came to its height. Appeals to the bishops increased, with wealth, the cause of litigations." Constantine, seeing how beneficial the authority of religion was to put an end to strifes, confirmed this right of appeal to the bishops.

* Giannone, Istoria di Napoli, lib. ii. cap. viii.

† Ibid. lib. iii. cap. vi.

Augustine complained of this custom, as encumbering the clergy with secular cares. Some bishops having abused their authority about seventy years after Constantine, several emperors confined their jurisdiction to ecclesiastical matters, or to civil causes, in which both parties agreed to a reference to their decision. The historian says that Justinian assigned to them also "religious causes, the ecclesiastical delinquencies (delitti) of the clergy, and diverse *voluntary jurisdictions*, even over the laity. By these steps, the arbitration of good will (la caritativa correttione), instituted by Christ, degenerated into a dominion." On these foundations, the clergy at last contrived to bring all causes, civil and religious, under their *spiritual* jurisdiction, under the pretence of justice denied; asserting that the bishop had this power of judging, "extending to all causes, neither by the concession of princes, nor for their own convenience, or introduced by the will of the people, or by custom, but that it was essential to the episcopal dignity, and given to them by Christ."*

Hallam treats this subject of ecclesiastical jurisdictions in a very luminous manner. He shows the influence acquired by the clergy from this source, traces their origin to the rise of Christianity, and shows that the primitive Christians, and more especially the clergy, were obliged from their principles to have recourse to arbitrations among themselves,—that the people continued attached to

* Historia del Concilio Tridentino, pp. 324, 325.

them, even after the empire became Christian; and the clergy gradually succeeded in obtaining from the civil power what the people and themselves had been long accustomed to enjoy by consent. Charlemagne maintained his own supremacy with vigour; but the popes never lost sight of their object, and gradually succeeded in establishing their temporal domination, which such a multitude of causes and circumstances contributed to favour, that nothing seems more unreasonable than to attribute it to the principle of an Establishment of religion. The very contrary is the conviction forced upon us by history—that it was entirely from the want of a regular definition of the limits of spiritual and temporal power, assigning to each its proper province, as in the Church of Scotland, that this terrible usurpation took place. Hallam says, "I have traced already the first stage of that ecclesiastical jurisdiction, which, through the partial indulgence of sovereigns, especially Justinian and Charlemagne, had become nearly independent of the civil magistrate." [Observe that this was an indulgence to the people as well as to the clergy, and not forced upon them by the civil power.] "Several ages of confusion and anarchy ensued, during which the supreme legal authority was literally suspended in France, and not much respected in other countries. It is natural to suppose that ecclesiastical jurisdiction, so far as even that was regarded in such barbarous times, would be esteemed the only substitute for coercive law, and

the best security against wrong. But I am not aware that it extended itself *beyond its former limits, till about the beginning of the twelfth century.* From that time it rapidly encroached upon the secular tribunals, and seemed to threaten the usurpation of an exclusive supremacy over all persons and causes."

Our author then goes on to trace the progress of Papal usurpation, not by, but in spite of, the power of the State. He points out several causes and circumstances that aided it, such as the false decretals, canon law, mendicant orders, excommunications, &c., of the latter of which he says, "This was the mainspring of the machinery that the clergy set in motion—the lever by which they moved the world. From the moment that these interdicts and excommunications had been tried, the powers of the earth might be said to have existed only by sufferance." *

One great source of the Church's strength was its unity of object and uniformity of plan. Separated from the ties of the world by the law of celibacy, which was, if not absolutely enforced by ecclesiastical authority, at least so strongly recommended, and so highly honoured by the laity before the time of Constantine, as to be almost obligatory, and afterwards became so—"they all advanced by the same path, to the same object;" while the power and property of temporal lords, and even sovereigns, was precarious and insecure.

* Middle Ages, chap. vii.

While the latter were subject to every variety of fortune, the former were continually advancing. To this unity of the Catholic body, and their strict adherence to one head, the rise and progress of Mohammedanism contributed in no small degree. The tempest that arose in Arabia, and swept in its desolating fury the extensive countries round the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, invaded the south-western countries of Europe, threatening to exterminate the Christian name. The policy of the Pontiff was exerted to roll back the rapid tide of Saracen conquest; and the civil powers, trembling for existence, readily united under the banner of the cross. Hence sprung the crusades; those seemingly extravagant enterprises, which have with us become the proverbial expression of every mad and unprincipled invasion, but which were probably, in reality, as much the result of policy as of superstition. At all events they greatly promoted the wealth of the Church, which became trustee for the families of the crusaders, and "the civil power did not think fit to make any opposition, deterred by the censures of the Church."* "The Papal throne has greater obligations to Mahomet, and his successors, than is believed."† It is not saying too much, that, humanly speaking, had some great and influential power not united together the disjointed fragments of the Roman Empire against the Arabian inva-

* Treatise on Benefices, chap. xxvii. p. 110.

† Villers, p. 325.

sion, Christianity would have been, if not exterminated, at least in no better condition than she is at this moment in Mauritania, Egypt, Persia, or Asia Minor. Thus God, not merely out of "seeming," but out of actual "evil, oft educing good."

To the want, then, and not to the existence, of an Establishment assigning the proper limits of secular and ecclesiastical power, as these are laid down so admirably in the Second Book of Discipline in the constitution of the Scottish Church, must we trace the Popish domination, and would do well to guard against its tyrannical and slavish doctrines, now revived under "a show of will worship, and Voluntary humility" and liberality; but yet arrogating an independence of the civil power, that ultimately, in former times, prostrated rulers and people in the dust. It may be said, in answer to this, that such precautions are now unnecessary—that the world is too enlightened ever to permit the recurrence of such a domination. Perhaps it is. But I am reasoning on facts and principles, and not on possibilities. If we are to be thrown for an answer to our reasonings on the chapter of chances and accidents, there is an end to the argument. A wise man hath said, "That which has been, shall be; and there is nothing new under the sun." Like causes will produce like effects. The same thing was said in the time of Father Paul, respecting the impossibility of the Church's acquiring any more "in this gainful trade;" to which he replies by pointing to the

order of Jesuits, who, with professions of poverty "grew rich by accident." "The facts we see," says he, "are yet a stronger degree of evidence than the words we hear."* All the temporalities which the Church enjoys, arose from alms and oblations; and it might therefore seem unjust to prevent the indefinite accumulation of her wealth. "Is it impossible there could be any inconvenience in Churchmen's acquiring *ad infinitum*, and if all the rest of the world were reduced to hold everything by form? Among Christians, human laws have nowhere set bounds to any man's estate, because he who increaseth it to-day, may alienate it to-morrow. But there is in this case a circumstance, perhaps without example, that an order of men perpetual, and which never dies, should be always capable of acquiring, and never of alienating. In the Old Testament, the tenths were given to the Levites, because it was the Lord's part—and therefore they were forbid to take any more a rule which they who enjoy the privileges of the Levites ought to observe, in taking upon them all the conditions required of them, and not only such as turn to their particular advantage."† True it is, none of us now living are likely to witness the recurrence of such a domination. The colossal empire of Rome temporal, and the more formidable and oppressive domination of Rome spiritual, that trampled on the necks of kings and people, and made traffic of men's souls and con-

* Treatise on Benefices. † Villers.

sciences, and "bound them in affliction and iron," were not reared without many struggles, and long and systematic perseverance. For ourselves, we need not fear individually. If we are to leave "Prince Posterity" to take care of himself, we may eat, drink, and be merry, and enjoy our blessings. But God hath placed checks to this abominable principle of selfishness, in the principles of humanity, and the feelings of nature. And moreover, He, somehow, in His righteous government, contrives to visit with speedy punishment the advocates and promoters of selfish or profligate principles and designs, even when they imagine that they at least shall be secure.

There is one sentence of Hallam, which, if taken up at random, might seem to militate, at least so far as his opinion goes, against the principle of a National Church—namely, when he says, "These passages are very remarkable (that is, passages in which he shows the tyranny of the French bishops over some abject princes of the Carlovingian race), and afford a decisive proof that the power obtained by National Churches, through the superstitious prejudices then received, and a train of favourable circumstances, was as dangerous to civil government as the subsequent usurpations of the Roman Pontiff, against which Protestant writers are apt too exclusively to direct their animadversions."

A single remark will explain this. By "National Churches" he does not mean here Churches recognised and endowed by the civil power, but that the

Churches, the bishops in other words, in separate individual countries, were even themselves formidable to the State, as well as being part of the Popish dominion. This they could not have been if the State had had the power to interfere *circa sacra.* The bishops again were subjected to the Pope, through the same means as both subjected princes—namely, the superstition of the laity. "Above all," says our author, "they (the bishops) were conscious that a persuasion of the Pope's omnipotence had taken hold of the laity." "While temporal sovereigns were opposing so inadequate a resistance to a system of usurpation, contrary to all precedent and to the common principles of society, it was not to be expected that National Churches should persevere in opposing pretensions for which several ages had paved the way."

Gregory I., able and ambitious, in the sixth century greatly advanced the supremacy of the Pope; but still relying principally on the superstition of an ignorant age. He claimed paramount authority over "the body of bishops." "From the time of Gregory, the popes appear in a great measure to have thrown away that scaffolding, *and relied, in preference, on the pious veneration of the people,* and the opportunities which might occur for enforcing their dominion with the pretence of divine authority."

From these extracts, as well as from the uniform testimony of history, the general truth which we have adduced from a large induction of historical

testimony, is strikingly confirmed by an author who had no Church object in view—namely, that the power of the Romish Church, which ultimately arrived at such a pitch of arrogance, as to say to monarchs, "Such is our pleasure, who by divine permission rule the world," actually arose from the superstition of the people, on the Voluntary principle, and that it was rather repressed than encouraged by the civil power of the emperors. The only apparent exception to this truth is in the case of Boniface III. in the seventh century, who is generally believed to have obtained the supremacy in the title of "Universal Bishop," conferred by the emperor and tyrant Phocas. Though Phocas had conferred this title, it had been no argument against the principle of an Establishment, which is totally opposed to any such acts of arbitrary tyranny or caprice. But any one who will consult Hallam * on this point, will at once see that for this supposed concession of that emperor there is no authority whatever. Mosheim, while he seems to give in to the generally received opinion, plainly overthrows it in a single sentence. "They relate this, however, upon the sole authority of Baronius, for none of the ancient writers have mentioned it." † The authority of Baronius, Hallam says, "is no authority at all," and he assigns no less than *seven* reasons, each of them conclusive in itself, that this concession either

* Vol. ii. chap. vii. note.

† Vol. ii. cent. vii. part ii. chap. ii. p. 169.

never was made, or though it had been made, that it was of no manner of weight to secure the Pope's supremacy. His note is admirable, and must settle this point without dispute.*

I shall conclude my extracts from this judicious writer with one important observation :—"It ought always to be remembered that *ecclesiastical,* and not merely *Papal* encroachments, are what civil governments, and the laity in general, have had to resist; a point which some very zealous opposers of Rome have been willing to keep out of sight. The latter arose out of the former, and perhaps were in some respects less objectionable. But the true enemy is what are called high church principles, be they maintained by a Pope, a bishop, or a presbyter,"—and, I would beg leave to add—by an Independent, or a Voluntary Churchman. In reality, the most dangerous of all is the latter; because, while it affects an entire independence of State interference, even in externals—the very essential principle of Romish domination—it affects an air of humility and submission. It may seem humble now, but we have seen it working in former ages. I mean not to say, that the advocates of this principle now would wish to see it dominant in its former effects. I only contend that such is the principle, and *such were* its results.

* See Note, p. 169.

Conclusions from the Whole Subject.

FROM the preceding induction of historical testimonies, the following conclusions may be fairly drawn :—

That great corruptions prevailed in the Christian Church in the first century, even while it might be strictly called apostolical.

That they had increased in the second century to a degree as great, and in some respects greater, than they have ever done in the Reformed Established Churches of Britain, with all their acknowledged abuses.

That they became much greater in the third and beginning of the fourth centuries, before the conversion of Constantine.

That their increase under Constantine, and even his successors, was in reality only the natural progress of events and principles; that they were in many cases materially checked by Constantine and some of his successors; and moreover, whatever might be the indiscretions of the Roman emperors in giving the Church wealth and power, they were not the consequence, but the clear violation or obvious abuse of the Establishment principle, which they ill understood; while there was nothing in the Voluntary principle, though it had been recognised, that could possibly have prevented them. The only remedy, in any one way

or another, would have been a State enactment, which is the Establishment, not the Voluntary principle. The idea of keeping the emperors Pagan for this purpose, is too ridiculous to merit any consideration.

That the corruptions of the Church originated in the general depravity of human nature, promoted and developed by a *great variety* of causes.

That the chief of these causes was the general ignorance of mankind, mightily enhanced by the universal calamities induced by the subversion of the Roman Empire.

That the false philosophy of the early ages, so soon mingled with the doctrines of Christianity, was far more calculated to foster than to dispel ignorance and superstition.

That this superstition, with many other evils, was deeply engrafted on Christianity, in the western nations, by the irruptions of the barbarians; events, in the inscrutable arrangements of a just and wise Providence, which Christianity, under any form, was, humanly speaking, unable to prevent.

That whatever enhancements of corruptions arose from the imperial gifts of Constantine, these gifts were on the Voluntary principle, and were not confined to Christians alone. Neither he nor any of his successors have ever given the Church a State endowment. In all probability an Establishment, could it have been erected, regulated on the principles of the Church of Scotland, would have prevented them.

But that such a national or imperial endowment by the Roman emperors, by formally setting apart a portion of the national property, never, in fact, took place under the Papacy. The parochial institution was not known till some centuries after Constantine. The Church, in all countries under the Papacy, acquired its wealth by voluntary gifts, and its civil jurisdictions from the voluntary appeals, founded on the early customs of the Christians, *permitted* by the civil power, and afterwards arrogated as a right by the clergy. The clergy early claimed the tithes, even in the second and third centuries, but when yielded, during at least the first eight centuries, it was voluntarily, or in submission to ecclesiastical and not to civil authority. When first granted by Charlemagne, it was in lieu of property wrested from the Church, and in consideration of favours received.

That the emperors actually resisted the growing power and influence of the clergy, even so early as the year 370, about thirty years after the death of Constantine. Had Constantine and his successors been to blame for exalting priestly power, it is somewhat singular that the Patriarch of Constantinople, the seat of the imperial government, did not obtain the ascendant, rather than the Bishop of Rome.

That the Church acquired her immense property and formidable power by the voluntary contributions and concessions of the superstitious of all ranks. In this she was aided by the monks—by

the superior learning and dexterity, and even humanity of the clergy, in dark and barbarous ages; together with the reverence attached to the city of Rome, from many centuries of slavish habit.

That by fraud, artifice, and boldness, supported by the superstition of the multitude, the clergy were enabled successfully to resist the attempts of emperors and princes to repress their ambition. Being a united body, with uniformity of plan and object, spread among all nations, corresponding with one another, and ultimately with one head, they were an undying and universal corporation, bent on their own aggrandisement, and were thus more than a match for the unsettled power of princes in barbarous times.

That while mankind are in an imperfect state, and selfishness may successfully practise upon ignorance, it is not safe to leave so large a body as the clergy to pursue their own objects, either of wealth or ambition, without admitting any State regulation.

That, therefore, the Voluntary principle, being a principle of entire independence of civil interference, even to prevent the undue wealth and power of the Church, if acquired from any other source than the State itself, which is in truth the Popish principle, *is dangerous.* For while the *abuses* of the Establishment principle admit of national correction, the evils of the Voluntary system, which are inherent in human nature, do not; because it rejects *all* external interference,

itself having no power whatever to preserve the purity or keep down the ambition of Churchmen.

That, therefore, it seems the dictate of reason and wisdom, adopted by our Reformers (who had experienced all the evils of priestly domination, and inquired into the causes, and considered the remedy), that the State, acting on the principle evidently held out in the Jewish Establishment, should make such a provision for the support of the true religion, as shall procure a sufficient number of religious teachers to every district of the country, while they shall neither be tempted to degrade their office, nor have the power of personal or party aggrandisement arising from it—to the injury of religion, and danger of the community.

These ends are secured by the principles of the Church of Scotland. If deviated from, the national voice can, without violent commotions, easily rectify the deviation. They should not, therefore, be surrendered for visionary theories, which have been tried and found dangerous. Had the Voluntary principle—namely, the rejection of State interference in behalf of religion, been always acted upon, we should yet have been groaning under a Popish domination;* with the wealth of Europe, America,

* John Owen, in proving the necessity of magistratical interference about religion, gives, as one of the "pernicious consequences" of the opposite doctrine, the following:—"The condemnation and abrenunciation of the whole work of reformation, in this and other nations, so far as it hath been promoted by laws, or constitutions of supreme magistrates, as in the removal of idolatry, destroying of idols and images, prohibiting the mass, declaring and asserting the

and the Indies, under the control of the once arrogant, though now humbled, Bishop of Rome.

I cannot help reflecting here on what appears to me the beautiful correspondence between the original principles of God's Word and the actual state of the world. I have endeavoured to show elsewhere that it is the duty of states and nations, a duty founded on Scripture, reason, and common sense, to support, encourage, and foster, both by kindness and *correction*, the Church of God; in other words, to provide for the instruction of their subjects in true religion. And it is pleasing to learn, from an examination of history, how much their duty is their interest, and how dearly they have paid for not understanding and practising it in former ages. As a religious man, caring for God's honour, and the welfare of my country and of mankind, I most earnestly pray, that on this subject they may be better enlightened; that they will have some mercy on the perishing souls of millions, and strive to enlighten them in the faith of Christ; that, profiting by the lessons of history, to which, it is to be lamented, many profess to feel more respect than to the Word of God, they will not think themselves absolved from this duty by plausible, though shallow and false notions, now so prevalent, on liberty and rights of conscience. It will always be found in the long run, that the truest liberty, and the truest freedom of conscience,

doctrine of the gospel, supporting the professors of it; which things have been visibly owned and blessed of God."—*Two Questions*, &c.

paradoxical as it may seem, is when both are under the restraints of the principles of "pure and undefiled religion." The heart of a Christian bleeds at the thought, not merely that in the world at large there are millions perishing for lack of knowledge, but that, in some large cities of the British Empire, such as our own, there are 50,000 persons without spiritual instruction, for one-half of whom there is no place of worship, and the rest of whom cannot be reached through the deficiency of ecclesiastical labourers. Who can possibly devise a remedy but those who wield the resources of the community? Any other notion is a mockery of common sense. Must this mass of irreligion, ignorance, misery, and vice, be left to generate itself, and infect society, without an effort, in a Christian country, to relieve it? Are those who have the means of relief in their power, from false notions of liberty of conscience, to stand by with folded hands, and see them go down into eternity ignorant of God and eternal life, till visionary schemes of voluntary benevolence are formed to rescue them? While men are thus arguing for leaving the truth to itself, does any man believe that the prince of darkness, whose subjects are unhappily more numerous than the children of light, and far more powerful to do evil than the latter are to do good, will be contented in giving only negative support to error and delusion? Certainly he will not. Are intolerance and persecution, detestable as they are, to be held forth as bugbears to frighten us from demanding

the direct support of the national counsels and means, in behalf of that which ought to be dearest to human beings, and the first object of a nation's care—namely, the honour of the God of nations, and the spiritual happiness, in time and in eternity, of the immortal beings within its limits? I profess to hold in abhorrence, as utterly impious, the doctrine that we ought to set up to a nation's gaze, in its government stripped of all connection with religion, an institution that has thrown off the armour of truth, and declared itself, if not the champion of error, at least the patron of indifference, in other words, of atheism; for whoever or whatever is not with God, is against Him. Any notion of a medium is delusion. I would as soon contend for the propriety of setting up Nebuchadnezzar's image in the plain of Dura, as for setting up such an institution to the admiration of the national mind. Though it were done, I know that God would still find means to preserve His truth, as He did His three young but noble servants in the fiery furnace, and His gospel in the no less heated furnace of persecution; but that is no reason why God's professing people should adopt a principle—as wild and enthusiastic as the maxim that men may sin because grace doth abound—namely, that truth is not to be aided by human means, because God is omnipotent. God's promise that seed-time and harvest shall endure, is not more sure than the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church of Christ;

but neither in the one nor the other will it justify our apathy, either as a nation, or as individuals.

To guard against false impressions, I would make these remarks :—

In thus tracing the corruptions of the Church to the Voluntary principle, combined with human depravity, I must not be accused of proving too much, and arguing against the appointment of Christ in the infancy of His Church. My doctrine is—that Christ, as Head of the Church, hath indicated in His Word His design that rulers should support it—that they should mutually respect each other's distinct rights, and mutually promote each other's benefit—and that so soon as such a mutual co-operation was possible, in the nature of things, it should be acted upon ;—that the early Christians did so on the first opportunity that presented itself, even when, by the admission of our opponents, what they call the corrupting principle of an Establishment had not affected them—and that it was from deviations from this principle, caused by circumstances almost incontrollable, that the evils of the Church arose. I do not say that voluntary gifts are in no case allowable; I only maintain that states are bound to supply their deficiencies on the one hand, and to regulate their extravagances on the other; for both, a fixed national provision is the surest remedy. Farther; though the scope of this Essay is very unfavourable to the clergy, I do not subscribe implicitly to the words of the admonition read by the Pope's legates to

the Council of Trent, "that it is a manifest thing, that the clergy, and pastors *alone*, were both the corrupted and corrupters," * nor do I think that they have been worse, but, on the contrary, greatly better, than the generality of the men of their age; and there were no doubt many who "sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst of Jerusalem."

Again, though such has been the history of Christianity, it is no objection to it that it hath been so over-burdened with the wickedness and folly of mankind. In both cases, the evils are traceable to human nature; † and should teach us this lesson, that so far is the maxim, with which we set out, from being true, "That the truth will take care of itself," that, on the contrary, it never has done so, and requires the whole wisdom and means of human skill and aid to resist its overwhelming opponents. And still, it is no less true that "it is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."—May He dispose the hearts of kings, and rulers, and people, to be zealous for God; and then they will no longer be as men who sow the wind and labour in the fire.

* Historia del Concilio Tridentino, p. 126.

† "It becomes us, however," says Le Bas, "with deep humiliation, always to remember that the sorcery which thus drugged the world was, from the first, most prodigally patronised by the vices and the wants of human nature."—*Life of Wickliff*, p. 24.

Note referred to in page 159.

"I observe that some modern publications annex considerable importance to a supposed concession of the title of Universal Bishop, made by the Emperor Phocas in 606, to Boniface III., and even appear to date the Papal supremacy from this epoch. Those who have imbibed this notion may probably have been misled by a loose expression in Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 169, though the general tenor of that passage by no means gives countenance to their opinion. But there are several strong objections to our considering this as a leading fact, much less as marking an era in the history of the Papacy. 1. Its truth, as commonly stated, appears more than questionable. The Roman pontiffs, Gregory I. and Boniface III., had been vehemently opposing the assumption of this title by the Patriarch of Constantinople, not as due to themselves, but as one to which no bishop could legitimately pretend. There would be something almost ridiculous in the emperor's immediately conferring an appellation on themselves, which they had just disclaimed; and though this objection would not stand against evidence, yet, when we find no better authority quoted for the fact than Baronius, who is no authority at all, it retains considerable weight. And, indeed, the want of early testimony is so decisive an objection to any alleged historical fact, that but for the strange prepossessions of some men, one might rest the case here. Fleury takes no notice of this part of the story, though he tells us that Phocas compelled the patriarch of Constantinople to resign his title. 2. But if the strongest proof could be advanced for the authenticity of this circumstance, we might well deny its importance. The concession of Phocas could have been of no validity in Lombardy, France, and other western countries, where, nevertheless, the Papal supremacy was incomparably more established than in the East. 3. Even within the empire it could have had no efficacy after the violent death of that usurper, which followed soon afterwards. 4. The title of Universal Bishop is not very intelligible; but whatever it meant, the patriarchs of Constantinople had borne it before, and continued to bear it afterwards. (Dupin, De Antiqua Disciplina, p. 329.) 5. The preceding popes, Pelagius II. and Gregory I., had constantly disclaimed the appellation, though it had been adopted by some towards Leo the Great in the Council of Chalcedon—(Fleury, tom.

viii. p. 95)—nor does it appear to have been retained by the successors of Boniface [at least for some centuries]. It is even laid down in the decretum of Gratian, that the Pope is not styled universal: Nec etiam Romanus pontifex universalis appellatur—(p. 303, edit. 1591)—though some refer its assumption to the ninth century. Nouveau Traité de Diplomatique, tom. v. p. 93. In fact, it has never been an usual title. 6. The popes had unquestionably exercised a species of supremacy for more than two centuries before this time, which had lately reached a high point of authority under Gregory I. The rescript of Valentinian III., in 455, quoted in a former note, would certainly be more to the purpose than the letter of Phocas. 7. Lastly, there are no sensible marks of this supremacy making a more rapid progress for a century-and-a-half after the pretended grant of that emperor." [The following is added in later editions of Hallam:—"The earliest mention of this transaction that I have found, and one which puts an end to the pretended concession of such a title as Universal Bishop, is in a brief general chronology by Bede, entitled, 'De Temporum Ratione.' He only says of Phocas,—Hic, rogante papa Bonifacio, statuit sedem Romanæ et apostolicæ ecclesiæ caput esse omnium ecclesiarum, quia ecclesia Constantinopolitana primam se omnium ecclesiarum scribebat. Bedæ Opera, curâ Giles, vol. vi. p. 223. This was probably the exact truth, and the subsequent additions were made by some zealous partizans of Rome, to be seized hold of in a later age, and turned against her by some of her equally zealous enemies. The distinction generally made is, that the Pope is 'Universalis ecclesiæ episcopus,' but not 'episcopus universalis;' that is, he has no immediate jurisdiction in the dioceses of other bishops, though he can correct them for the undue exercise of their own. The Ultramontanes of course go further."—ED.]—*Hallam's History of the Middle Ages*, vol. ii. chap. vii. part i. note.

PART II.

THE

MORAL LAW

APPLICABLE TO

THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION.

THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION.

THE subject that has fallen to me in this course of Lectures is headed "THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION;" or, in other words, the bearing of the Moral Law on "The Social Constitution." The special law under which it is ranged is the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." "The Social Constitution" is a very comprehensive title, and had it stood alone, might have been supposed to include many of those topics already handled by preceding lecturers, both under the first and under the second table of the law, such as public worship, family worship, and parental and filial duties, all of which are literally and strictly social. These it was evidently the intention of those who arranged this course to exclude from the subject entrusted to me. I understand, therefore, that in discussing it, I am not to direct my attention to the consideration of the Moral Law as applicable to any of these. But there

remain behind many other social duties, such as masters and servants, employer and employed, minister and people, rulers and ruled, both in the Church and in the State; in the ordinary business of life, in labour, in commercial, manufacturing, in economical, municipal, civil, ecclesiastical, and national relations. All these are embraced under the social duties. They are all classed by systematic theological writers, and writers on Christian morals, under the fifth commandment; because the parental and filial relation, or family relation, is not only the origin of society, but, in point of fact, comprehends within it all those principles, feelings, wants, dispositions, and affections towards God and man, though, it is true, on a less extended scale, and consequently all those relative duties which the conditions and emergencies of all the parts of the social constitution imply and require. And the more nearly the various sections of the social constitution resemble a well-ordered family, and the more closely they are conducted on its principles and feelings, the more happy, honourable, venerable, and lively, are they in the sight of all intelligent and well-conditioned men. Hence the phrase, "Father of his people," and such like, at once points out a state of things descriptive of all that is just, considerate, forbearing, and kind on the one hand, and happy, orderly, affectionate, obedient, and prosperous on the other. It is not without reason, therefore, that the social duties are thus classed under the fifth commandment in our

books of theology and morals, and in the subordinate standards of our Church.

It were obviously impossible for me, in a lecture of this sort, to illustrate and enforce the moral law as applicable to these in detail—to describe the nature and duties of each social relation, to point out their violations, to exhibit specifically the advantages of the discharge of the one, or the evils arising from the neglect or violation of the other.

Instead of this, I believe I shall better discharge the duty devolved upon me if I endeavour to reach and set before you some general principles to prove that all these social relations are under law to God in point of fact, and that it is every way reasonable and beneficial to man that they should be so, because of God and through God and to God are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

This I shall endeavour to do under these heads:—

I. From some general principles indicated in the Word of God, but founded in the natural relations between God and man, I shall prove that all social relations are under law to God.

II. From the direct principles and declarations of the Scriptures of truth, I shall prove that all social relations are under law to God.

III. Disorganising theories rife in the present day, that would seek to subvert these principles of the Word of God.

IV. The relative advantages or disadvantages of these theories on the one hand, and of those principles on the other.

I.

From some General Principles indicated in the Word of God, but founded in the Natural Relations between God and Man, I shall prove that all Social Relations are under Law to God.

It is of some importance to establish in your minds the fact, the great truth, that in all these relations men *are* under law to God, bound by the moral law of God, and under obligation to regulate themselves thereby. Many may, perhaps, think this unnecessary, as nobody denies it. But those who think so are no less ignorant of the theoretical opinions maintained, and widely propagated, in political, commercial, and ecclesiastical discussions and controversies, than they are of the prevailing maxims and practices of ordinary business and social life, in which men both act and write and speak as if God were not only not in all their thoughts, but had no right to intrude into such affairs at all; and that to refer to Him or His law, or a judgment-day in such matters, were as unreasonable as unseasonable and inconvenient, and an offence against each man's private judgment and personal freedom, and that the business of life could not go on at all if men were to be so tied up as that they could not use some, nay, considerable liberties with the moral law of God; in other words, if they were compelled to speak the simple truth, to be rigidly honest and just, and never to lie nor deceive, nor to take any

advantage for their own interest of another's ignorance, stupidity, weakness, or facility. Now, in every case where this occurs, it betrays a thoroughly bad condition of the individual; and where it occurs extensively in a community, it indicates such a morally rotten and corrupt state of society as points to its speedy dissolution. It is the source of those quarrels, outbreaks, litigations, social disorders, and wide-spread calamities that are dignified with the names of a crash or a crisis in men's affairs, and which tear asunder the peace and prosperity of families, churches, communities, and nations. It is made impossible, in the adaptation of God's moral government to man's physical condition, that the prosperity of the latter can consist with traversing the former. It is in this view of the case that the prophet laments in the following strains: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard,

as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city" (Isa. i. 4–8). "For our transgressions are multiplied before Thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; in transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment" (Isa. lix. 12–15).

It is manifestly, then, not only important but necessary that all men, and in all conditions, and relations, and transactions, should know that they are under law to God immediately and directly; and though that law does not regulate the special mode of acting, it regulates and controls the moral considerations of truth, justice, honesty, and fairness on which they must proceed. The doctrines of the world, which is called in Scripture the enemy of God, and said to be lying in the wicked one—the doctrines of heathenism, or, in other words, of idolatry and atheism—the doctrines of infidelity and popery, which are just the doctrines of and the accommodations to corrupt human nature—all harmonise in dealing freely with the law, not only practically declaring, but theoretically maintaining, the propriety, expediency, and necessity, in certain

circumstances, of lying, fraud, dishonesty, and the like, as if it were God, and not the devil, that had made it difficult for human society to go on on the the strict principles of God's holy, just, and good law, which reacheth to the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hence the false code of honour which demands reparation for contradicting the word of a man whom it admits to have been a deceiver, a seducer, an adulterer, and, in the sight of God's law, a murderer, and such like; hence the false code of understood commercial dealings in placing the value of a sound on a dressed-up or adulterated article, and many other such things. Now, all this is not only most insulting to the majesty, holiness, justice, goodness, and wisdom of God; but, when justified as right and necessary and unavoidable, and not to be tried by the moral law of God, but the supposed necessities and expediences of human society, is subversive of all idea of duty either to God or man, and an insult to the Almighty.

Duty refers to a superior authority, to a Judge, and to a law by which failure, neglect, or violation of duty must be tried, before the Judge can be an avenger to execute righteousness. Without the notion and sense of these there can be no such thing as duty. Duty is absurd on any other ground. Social duties, therefore, imply a social authority and presiding Judge, and a social law as the standard of right and wrong. They refer us immediately and directly to the Author of society—to God, who created man male and female at the first, consti-

tuted thus the family as the foundation of all social relations—hath made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell on the face of the earth—facts as clearly declared in the conditions of human society as in the Word of God. And as He placed our first parents, the first human family, under His moral law, and sent men forth, both by His command to replenish the earth, and by His providence at Babel, and ever since has dispersed them in wave succeeding wave over the face of the earth, and calls Himself the God not only of the families of Israel, but of all the families of the earth, and the God not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles, or all other nations also, so hath He sent forth with them the law originally engraven on their hearts, and renewed and republished at Mount Sinai, and spread forth and proclaimed in all its integrity, and with renewed exhibitions of its immutability and spirituality, and clearer exhibitions of its sanctions by His Son from heaven, when His law went forth from Jerusalem, and the Word of the Lord from Mount Sion and Jerusalem, and the peculiar polity connected therewith was demolished and broken down, still to regulate their conduct in all the relations into which human society has branched out, and which in all its comprehensive extent it includes. This law He has never repealed, and this mode of dealing He has never declared His intention to reverse. He is thus declared to be the Governor among the nations, as the God of heaven and of earth, and that by His law they

must be ruled, and to Him must they be answerable.

If there be no such divine constitution of society, and no such responsibilities of society to God, and no such law as the rule and standard, there can be no social duty at all. There may be the power, or even the skill, of the greater number, or the stronger or more dexterous party to overbear or overreach the weaker and less skilful, and to which force may compel, or expediency and terror induce, the feebler and more ignorant to submit; but duty there can be none. One individual has no inherent right over another individual, and the mere numerical addition of other individuals who have no more personal right than the first individual, cannot constitute collective or associated right, and cannot, therefore, constitute any co-relative duty or co-relative obligation. There can be no social duties and no social rights in such a case. We must, therefore, look somewhere else to find their origin and rule.

The necessities of human society — if it could be called society where there are no moral bonds — and the necessity of self-preservation, might lead to the formation of rules and laws, but could never constitute duties. There might be, and there would be, might; but there could be no right on the one hand, and no duty on the other. It would be power on the one hand, and weakness on the other; despotism on the one hand, and helpless, abject submission on the other. Human society,

in a moral point of view, would be no higher than the bestial herd, which ranges itself under the leadership that has fought its way to supremacy by its brute force—no higher than the wild denizens of the forest, who submit to the king of the beasts, and tremble when the forest resounds with his roar.

Hence it is that human society, corrupt and ungodly as it is, and little as righteousness actually bears sway in the heart of the sons of men, in any of its aspects and relations, whether public or private, and from the despot to the slave, is obliged to refer to a rule of right, with which it attempts to prove that its acts correspond, even when it tramples all righteousness, truth, and honour under its feet; in other words, is compelled to recognise a supreme Arbiter and Judge, a supreme moral authority and law, and thus to confess that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." This great truth is the foundation of society, the safeguard of liberty, the bulwark to control the despot, the breakwater which, though it may be concealed under the surface of the deep, rolls back the tumultuous waves of popular disorder and anarchy, is the secret terror of the tyrant, and the last refuge of the oppressed. So the Psalmist in several places sublimely says, "Why do the heathen (the nations) rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands

asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. He shall break them with a rod of iron; He shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." "He stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of the waves, and the tumults of the people."

What were there to sustain the heart of the patriot and martyr before the tyrant and the persecutor, if he could not appeal against their sentence, and meet their frown by looking up and sisting them before a higher tribunal, where power is controlled by infinite justice, and directed by infinite goodness and unsearchable wisdom? The heart of society would break but for the appeal to a future judgment, and there would be no bounds to oppression and wrong.

Every human creature in every human relation, then, is not only laid under law to God, but has an interest as deep and lasting as eternity in the reign of Jehovah and the authority of His law; and none have a deeper interest in it than the labouring man, and the poor and the defenceless of every degree.

The theories of modern so-called socialism might do for a colony of harmless beavers, guided by the unerring precision of heaven-bestowed instincts, but will not do for human society, moved by hell-born passions, and guided by satanic intelligence. To control these, there must be the

sanctions of God's moral law, a future judgment, and a future award. Every one is acquainted with the fact that when the first French revolutionists, in the phrenzy of the atheistic madness engendered by the mother of abominations, herself in turn made to drink of the cup of the wrath of God, for the cup of the wine of her fornications, with which she had so long besotted the nations, and France in particular, and which is yet again wrapped in its stupor, impiously decreed there was no God, and enthroned the impersonation of lewdness as the Goddess of Reason, their bloody but sagacious chief for the time found himself compelled to say, "If there be no God, we must invent one," and induced the Convention to decree the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, and to make a fruitless attempt to restore the face of religion to the people, torn with wild passions, and scourged with their own crimes, "their own iniquities correcting them," and "binding them in affliction and iron" "as it is at this day."

II.

From the Direct Principles and declarations of the Scriptures of truth, I shall prove that all Social Relations are under Law to God.

It will not and cannot be reasonably denied, consistently with the facts of the case, that during the whole of what is called the patriarchal dispen-

sation, or the history of God's dealings with men, recorded in the brief notices of the Book of Genesis, embracing a period of about 2400 years, and before the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, that God dealt with men as such—that, as a moral Governor, He dealt with the *race* of man. Of this you have instances in the institution of the Sabbath, made for man, and not for Jews only, in the revelation of the Fourth Commandment, when God had finished the work of creation, and of which, in the division of time into weeks, there is the intimation among all nations; and to which institution, as already existing and of long standing and well-known, there is very plain reference in the repeated use of the words in the 16th of Exodus, "to-morrow is the rest of the Sabbath," and that before the republication of the law from Mount Sinai—an institution that had no special respect to Jews as Jews. They did not exist as a separate people for nearly 2500 years thereafter. You have another instance of God's dealings with man as man in the awful visitation of the flood, whose traces are still on the earth. (See Gen. vi. 5–13.) The same thing is declared when God established His bow in the cloud, as the symbol of His forbearance and mercy to man, and His faithfulness to His promise that the waters should no more return to cover the earth. In this visitation He dealt with man as man, in all His relations as amenable to His law and judgment, and not with any peculiar class of men, or by any covenant of peculiarity. On the same footing God dealt with the impious Babel builders,

whom, though He confounded their language and their design, and dispersed them over the face of the earth, He did not release from moral obligation, from responsibility to His law and government. He dealt on the same footing with the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain, which He destroyed for their wickedness. Though He made choice of Abraham and his family with a view to the great remedial dispensation of mercy, yet this did not interfere with, much less set aside, the great principles of His moral government with man. These went steadily on as before, "justice and judgment being the habitation of His throne, though mercy and truth continually went before His face," unchanging as Himself, following the wheels of His chariot, as He sitteth on the clouds and rules among the children of men.

Coming down to the time of the deliverance of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob out of Egypt, we find Him dealing with Pharaoh on the same ground. He sent Moses to that oppressive tyrant and taskmaster, to command him to let His oppressed go free, not simply in the peculiar character of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but in the character of Jehovah, the only Living One, which Pharaoh must own, and for the manifestation of His glory in the sight of all the nations. (See Exod. iii. 11–16.) Moses spake to Pharaoh in the name of Jehovah—a name which all nations must own and obey, and which carried in itself His claim to submission and homage.

When God had in many signal ways avenged

Himself upon Pharaoh and his hosts, and brought up the Israelites with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, did He throw off this character, and relieve the nations, or the associated tribes of man, from the authority and obligation of His law? When the law, as given at Mount Sinai, entered on this state of things, were all other nations except the Israelites freed from its dominion? Is there the smallest trace of such a release? Was it not rather added anew because of transgression, to curb and restrain the bad, and to lead those who owned it to Christ; but never to relax its hold upon any? Was it announced in any such peculiar form as to intimate that henceforward the nations were not to be dealt with on the principles of His moral law? Or if the principles of the moral law were to be applied to one people in their social relations, and something in the way of an ecclesiastical organisation, they were to be applied to them alone, and that only for a time—till the coming of Christ; and that when He came, and their polity and peculiar church-state found their completion in Him, the application of the revealed moral law of God, in its two tables, was to cease, both to them and all other nations in their social and national capacity? Or is it not rather the fact that when the world had fallen into universal atheistic idolatry and wickedness, from which it could never have emerged by any light or efforts of its own, but must have sunk deeper and deeper in all the crimes which rendered the earth sick of its in-

habitants, and it was ready to vomit them out, this people were specially chosen of God, and by a miraculous dispensation established under a special polity, to be an example to all nations of the way in which God ought to be served, and of the way in which God would morally deal with them? And when it was fully proved, both of them and of all the nations of the earth, that the world by its wisdom knew not God, and, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator, God over all blessed for ever, and given over to work all manner of nameless abomination with greediness, and not only did the same, but had pleasure in them that did them —when darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, God fulfilled His promise by Isaiah to send One who was to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of His people Israel, and whom all nations and kindreds, kings and princes, were commanded to obey; and the kingdom and nation that should not serve Him should perish, yea, that nation should be utterly wasted.

You will remember the character under which God commissioned Moses to go to Pharaoh to demand the release of His afflicted people. It was by His name JAH, JEHOVAH, I AM. The same Jehovah who appeared to Abraham and Lot for their deliverance, and for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was the great Angel of the Covenant, the Man, the Jehovah. This, at least,

was no part of the Jewish theocracy, which did not for nearly 500 years thereafter exist. It was under the universal government of God as Governor among the nations. He who commissioned Moses by His name Jah, the great I AM, to go to Pharaoh to demand the release of the oppressed children of Abraham, 430 years after the promise to Abraham was made, was He who on earth, 2000 years thereafter, said, "Before Abraham was I am—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,"—who judicially hardened Pharaoh's heart, and finally destroyed him and his host in the mighty waters; and the ransomed of the Lord sang the Song of Moses and the Lamb on the further shores of the Red Sea when as yet there were no thunderings nor voices uttered from Sinai, and no economy of Jewish peculiarity existing; and why should the character and relations of this I AM, revealed as the same in and from eternity, before Abraham and for 2500 years after Abraham, to the nations, and their duties and obligations to Him, change and cease in these latter days? He is still the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father. The Government is still upon His shoulder. That His reign should be more universally extended, and shine forth in brighter effulgence, we are taught to expect; but that it should cease is impossible. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and of His kingdom there is no end.

But let us come immediately to the revelation of the law from Mount Sinai, and see what light that

solemn transaction throws on our present subject. Was it addressed to the Israelites in their individual capacity only, or chiefly, or in their social capacity? And if in their social capacity, was it so addressed only to them?

It cannot be denied, and ought never to be forgotten, but constantly impressed on the heart of social life, that the moral law, which is enduring and eternal, and cannot for one moment wax old or vanish away in its authority, was addressed not to the individual Israelite, not to the Israelitish Church exclusively, but to the Israelitish Church and nation, and before the typical church-state was formally constituted at all. It was addressed to the assembled people.* This is a point of some moment. It will freely be admitted it was addressed to all mankind, to every man without exception; but this admission does not exhaust the question. It is still asked, Is it addressed to man as an individual, or to man in his social relations? In some or in all of these social relations? If only in some, what are they? and what are those which are exempted or excluded? We are not left to general inferences on this subject, though one might with perfect safety conclude, from the nature of God, and the dependence of the creature, that His moral law must relate to all possible social and natural relations, whether affecting families, communities, nations, or churches. If they can in their united capacity, and by any common or cor-

* Exod. xix. 2–8.

porate acts, disobey or dishonour God, they can in like manner do the reverse; and by His law they are forbidden to do the former, and by consequence, by the same law, are bound to maintain and promote His glory and honour. That the moral law was addressed to Israel in a corporate capacity, comes out most clearly from the circumstances attending its promulgation. It is perfectly manifest, from the narrative in the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Exodus, that it was a transaction between God and the people of Israel, and with the people of Israel through the mediation of Moses and their elders. The following deeply interesting and solemn transaction takes place:—Israel "camped before the mount, and Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say unto the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice in deed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do;

and Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord." In this and the succeeding narrative, you have everything indicating a dealing with a whole nation; God asserting His proprietorship in all the earth as the ground of His procedure, Moses speaking to the elders to and for the people, and the people "answering together," and engaging to obey,—the command being addressed to Israel, to the "house of Jacob," and to the children of Israel—all expressing a transaction with a people in their corporate capacity, and even by their representatives. It is to this people, then, in their collective capacity, that the law of God is addressed, when "God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought THEE out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage," Exodus xx. 1, 2,—addressing them not in any character of peculiarity, but as JEHOVAH—*their* covenant God, *their* Redeemer; the peculiar relation increasing the natural, eternal, and universal obligation to Him as Jehovah. To this people every separate command is addressed in particular, and the whole sum and spirit of it in the general. In Deuteronomy, or second announcement of the law, this is plain and express, as may be seen in perusing the whole fourth and fifth chapters; and in the sixth the very first principle, and comprehensive essence of all religion, is addressed to them as a people, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.*

* Deut. vi. 4.

It is not possible to have language more definite and express to show that the moral law was revealed to the Israelites in their national capacity, embracing all social relations.

But it may be said in answer to all this, that the ceremonial and judicial law were in like manner addressed to the people of Israel, and do we argue that they also continued binding on the nation? We answer, they did till the time appointed of God. There was not for them one rule of obligation for the nation and another for the individual. In the moral and gospel principles involved, they were the same for both; though in the Old Testament itself, as Paul demonstrates in the Epistle to the Hebrews, intimation is given that the things which may be shaken, that the shadowy and typical, were to give place to the substance and the thing signified; but not the smallest intimation is given that the national was to cease, and the individual and the private to come in its place. There is nothing of the kind. The law of God, and all duty to Him, lie in their obligation on nations as on individuals. And in the sum of the Ten Commandments, love to God and love to men, as addressed to sinners, is involved all duty to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whether contained in the moral law directly, or in the whole word and ordinances of God's revelation and appointment; and so, clearly, is duty to "the Church of the

living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth."

Indeed, from aught that can be gathered from the Bible, it might be as easy to argue that the law of God, or the duties of religion and morality, were not addressed to individuals, as that they were not addressed to nations; but such reasoning is unscriptural and absurd on either hand. God cannot thus be severed from His creatures, nor they from Him; nay, His creatures cannot be severed from one another. The duties and interests of nations are bound up in those of the individual, and those of the individual, both for time and for eternity, are bound up in those of the community. Can a nation, or its rulers, be infidel and ungodly, and the souls of its individual members remain unscathed? Or the character and interest of its families, and social communities throughout, escape the pernicious consequences? On the contrary, does not the "enemy then come in like a flood," spreading moral pestilence and social desolation? God is the great bond of all creation, in all its ranks and combinations. One nation cannot plead entire and isolated independence of any other. Even the savages of Africa can, and do, influence the people of Britain, both in their moral and physical condition. One nation cannot say of another, "I have no need of thee." Who can even say that the earth we inhabit has no relations to the moral universe beyond it? The whole scheme of redemption proceeds on another

principle altogether than the denial of such relations. "Into these things the angels desire to look."—"That now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." God appeared to Moses, and sent him to Pharaoh and the Israelites in Egypt in the very same character in which He revealed to Israel His law,—as the I AM, Jehovah, having an equal claim on Israelites and heathens before, as after, the giving of the law from Sinai.

Not only the Israelites were thus dealt with morally as a nation, but the nations around them were dealt with in like manner. Thus God in calling Jeremiah to the prophetic office declares, "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and ordained thee to be a PROPHET TO THE NATIONS;" and again, "And JEHOVAH said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth; see I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant."* In other words, to declare how God would deal with them as they owned or rejected His authority and law.

Are these principles repealed under the gospel? The very reverse. They are handed over to it by express revelation, thus,—"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were aforetime written for

* Jer. i. 5, 9, 10.

our learning,"* so designed and intended from the beginning. They have lessons for all succeeding time; and the mind of that person must be strangely constituted that will conclude that the lessons are, that we must do the very reverse; and that these principles are repealed and annulled. It will not do to apply to these things, so distinctly moral in their nature, the phrase "which were ready to wax old and vanish away;" applied in Scripture to that which is in its nature and design mutable, and to be removed according to express appointment and prediction, when that which is to remain was come.†

There are many other ways in which these general principles might be proved, such as by approved examples and warnings exhibited in the Bible, and, as such, fitted by the very moral constitution of man to afford the appropriate lessons to go and do likewise, or to beware of and avoid their pernicious ways, respectively. Gen. xviii. 17–19: "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judg-

* Rom. xv. 4.

† I feel it my duty to note here, and call, and even earnestly beseech, attention to the danger and mischief originating in the denial of national religion.

ment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." This is said of him in a social capacity, whether he be considered as the father of a family, the master of a household, or a prince who could arm five hundred men to go out to war, and before the peculiar constitution at Sinai existed. We have another example in the case of Joshua, who, at the conclusion of a public life of glory and dignity, "gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God, and Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel." He enumerates the Lord's dealings with them as a people; and adds—Joshua xxiv. 14–16, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods." They pledged themselves to serve God, and called God for a record upon their souls. Time would fail me to tell of the cases of Eli, who was punished

for culpable weakness to his sons, who made themselves vile, and he restrained them not; of Josiah, Hezekiah, and Jehoshaphat, who feared and served God, and read in the book of the moral law of God to the people, and charged them to observe it; of the sins and punishments which befell families and houses and tribes, and the whole nation, who violated the law and covenant of their God.

It is not, and cannot be, denied by any that during the whole existence of the Jewish economy and Church-State, the principles I am endeavouring to maintain were proclaimed and acted on as of divine authority. Is there, then, anything in that dispensation itself that proclaims the lesson to rulers, either then or in coming time, that they ought to let religion alone and mind earthly things? Unquestionably not; nothing of the kind, but the reverse, is indicated. So Isaiah, or rather the Spirit of God, addressing the redeemed Church, says, "The kingdom and nation that shall not serve Thee shall perish; yea, that nation shall be utterly wasted." But in regard to that which was really to wax old and vanish away, Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, proves at large, both from its nature and express Old Testament Scripture, that nothing else could be. Not so in regard to the doctrine of the duty of rulers. And our own reason following out the principles of the Old Testament, and apart from their violation by other rulers, would undoubtedly conclude that a principle sacredly embodied by God Himself, in His own

divine institution, in ruling the Jews, as well as in His own divine actings before the Jews existed, must in its own nature, and throughout all ages, be morally and religiously right; and unless He Himself expressly declared the reverse, morally binding on all others to go and do likewise. It has been well said by Dr Wardlaw, in support of the argument in favour of infant baptism, from the principle involved in the admission of infants to the Church by circumcision, "I demand the *statute of repeal*" for its overthrow. The change of an old law, he adds, as much demands an express authority, as the enactment of a new. The saying of Christ, "My kingdom is not of this world," was as true before Christ came in the flesh as it is now, and no more true now than it was then.

But it has in some way got into the minds of many that the example of God Himself, in sanctioning and commanding certain things that Jewish rulers did in support of His religion, law, and authority, and for His glory, is exactly that very thing which destroys them as an example at all, because, they say, God cannot be imitated. But men may be imitated in doing what God commands and approves, not as a mere act, but an enduring system. And in such imitation we cannot be wrong.

But this strange conceit is taken away, when we recall the fact that we have seen Christ acting as the Ruler of nations before the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, and that by express revelations

conveying to them His will, as well as by judgments inflicted when His will is despised. The fact, that in the Jewish state the civil law was given by God Himself, is the guarantee to all nations that its moral principles could neither be arbitrary, nor unjust, nor irreligious. It is not true, as it is often affirmed, that the Jewish state was the church, and the church the state. There was a clear line of distinction between them, and Uzziah was punished for forgetting it. Infants were admitted to the church, but not to the state, by circumcision. It was a seal of the righteousness of faith. Many were excluded from the privileges of the Jewish Church who were neither banished the country, nor put to death. The Jewish monarchy was not a type of the kingly office of Christ. There were Jewish monarchs who were types, but neither the monarchy itself, nor all Jewish monarchs, were such. There is not a tittle of evidence to prove such an assertion. On the contrary, the monarchy was an invasion and traversing of the theocracy. God "gave them a king in His anger, and took him away in His wrath." That kings were sometimes inspired prophets did not deprive them of their kingly character, nor did it make them office-bearers of the Church, and so give them an ecclesiastical, and not a civil character, when they acted for God and religion. Prophets were not, as such, office-bearers of the Church; and the fact that kings had prophets to instruct them, does not prove that they ceased to act for God in their kingly capacity. We

have still a sure word of prophecy as well as they, to which kings would do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place. Kings who were neither types nor prophets, but acting in their relation to God as the moral Governor of the universe, and Ruler among the nations, received His authority and approbation for the things which they did for the reformation of religion, and the restoration of His worship; such as Jehoshaphat, Josiah, Hezekiah, and the like—"reading out of the book of the law," as kings may and ought to do still. One thing is most certain, that neither Cyrus, nor Darius, nor Artaxerxes, kings of Persia, were either types or part of the Jewish theocracy, and yet they received divine approbation, as well as were moved by the Spirit of God (compare Zech. iv. 6 with Ezra i. 1–4), to aid His people not only in returning to their own land, but with the resources of the kingdom to restore the temple and worship of God at Jerusalem; and God's redeemed servant said, "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, who hath put it into the king's heart to beautify the Lord's house, which is at Jerusalem."* The king of Nineveh proclaimed a fast, and the people humbled

* Dr Wardlaw, feeling the force of this reasoning, deals with the cases now referred to in the following manner:—

"During the old Covenant, when Israel was His people, and that people was His Church—while He was, in a special sense, 'the King of Israel,' He at the same time, did not relinquish His government over the nations; and that government was conducted invariably with a view to the effectuation of His purposes, whether of good or evil, of prosperity or adversity, toward His own people.

themselves, and in honouring God even thus far, their city was saved from destruction.

These general principles of the Word of God, as well as of natural religion, clearly demonstrate the application of the law of God to all social relations, and a foundation is thus laid for the application of a vast number of specific passages of God's Word to the duties of all in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals. It is impossible to quote them here in particular. I shall however merely direct your attention to the admirable summary of our social duties as embraced under the Fifth Commandment as contained in the Larger Catechism, and refer you to that admirable compendium itself for the scrip-

As far as surrounding nations could be made to affect the interests of that people, all in their condition and history was arranged with that view. But did He call on the surrounding nations—did He make it a part of their national duty—did He lay it as a command upon their princes, that they should provide out of their exchequers for the maintenance of His worship in Israel? I need not answer such a question. Let me not be reminded of the cases of *Cyrus*, and *Darius*, and *Artaxerxes*, the kings of Persia, into whose hearts it was put, by the God of Israel, when the seventy years' captivity in Babylon had terminated, to give commandment for the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, and to make provision for the rebuilding of the temple of Jehovah, and for the re-establishment of His worship there, by the restoration of the vessels of divine service which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away, and by the issuing of orders for pecuniary, and sacrificial, and other supplies of what was required for its maintenance. It is granted. This was the way in which divine providence was pleased to fulfil divine predictions. It was an illustration of the saying of Solomon—'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of waters He turneth it, whithersoever He will.'"

ture proofs, and I would most earnestly commend those and the other invaluable summaries of divine truth and duty which constitute the subordinate standards of our Church to your most careful perusal and study.

III.

Disorganising Theories rife in the present day, that would seek to subvert these Principles of the Word of God.

It is hardly necessary, I trust, to give you a summary of these principles. The doctrine is, that all social relations are under law to God; that if there be social duties, there must be an authority to claim them, a law to regulate them, and a judge to enforce them; that these are alike the dictates of natural and revealed religion; and in particular, that the moral law of God was addressed originally and at Mount Sinai to man, to the Israelites in particular, in a social capacity, and has never been, and indeed never can be repealed. If all this has been shown, it might be enough to silence the objector by Paul's question, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" But the case admits of intelligible answers. Against the doctrines in question, then, there are several common objections, or rather, confident assertions, which run the current of society as self-evident truths—the denial of which it is said argues a weak, nar-

row, bigoted, and unenlightened mind, some hundreds of years behind the age. Such statements are imposing, somewhat alarming to the timid, and very gratifying to the self-satisfied, the vain, the confident, the conceited, and, withal, very convenient to the license-loving propensities of fallen, selfish, and earthly-minded humanity. But whether they will stand the test of the religious and moral reason, or the light of eternity, or whether they will not disappear before them, as the imposing and gorgeous cloud before the bright light and heat of the summer sun, is another question.

1. One of the most common of these is, that such doctrines interfere with the rights of individual conscience; but what conscience is, what are its rights, or who gave it its rights, and to whom it is responsible in the use of them, are all questions it is not deemed necessary very accurately to determine; and though of all others the most important and difficult, they think it safest not to raise them at all. But raised they must be, and determined also, before any one is entitled to have an opinion on the subject.

Let us see, in the first place, to what extent the objection reaches. If it be good for the first table of the moral law of God, that which refers to duties to God Himself, it is good also for the second, viz., to those which refer to the duties which respect our fellow-men. If God has no claims over all social relations for duty to Himself, it is not easy to see with what force of reason or propriety

it can be maintained He can have claims over them for our duties to one another. If God cannot demand from society duty to Himself in its collective capacity, because all are then bound to co-operate in its discharge, and this interferes with individual liberty of conscience, then it is absurd to say that God can demand it for His creatures, because the latter implies the former. And to say that God may demand duties of society for society itself, and invest it with the right of carrying them into effect in suitable and competent ways, but may not do the same in reference to Himself, is to make God not the sovereign but the servant of human society. And to assert that conscience has the right inherent in each individual of arresting all social duty to God, and consequently all social duty to man, or to society on the authority of God, is "to make conscience not a servant, but a lord;" not a creature, but a god—all which is as absurd as it is impious.

But what is conscience? Of course it is a creature of God, and, like every other creature, subject to its Creator, and its Creator's will and law. It is not a lord, but a subject, and, like every other subject, liable to punishment if it disobey the ruler and sovereign; and as there cannot be two sovereigns, more than two masters, of conflicting claims or authority, and God alone is Lord of the conscience, yet He is Lord and Lord-paramount, and Him it must not only obey for itself, but all others it must allow to obey; and if there be social duties both to God and man by God's command and authority,

conscience cannot, on any pretended rights and liberties of its own, step in and arrest their discharge. It has no rights, and can have no rights and no duties incompatible with what God commands; and inasmuch as if any one impose on it duties contrary to God's commands, or aside from them, it is not only not bound, but prohibited to obey; so if anything is enjoined which God and duty to Him demand, it is prohibited to resist.

The very name conscience throws light on this subject. As duty refers to a law objective, so does conscience to an objective standard or guide. Literally, it signifies *knowledge with*—that is, knowledge in harmony with some other knowledge, rule, or law,—the mind of man, or soul of man, in questions of moral right or wrong, in harmony with the mind or will or law of God; its ultimate standard, rule, and law. It has neither rights nor liberties, duties nor obligations, that conflict with this rule and law; and the moment that it pleads it has, it is not only a rebel, but a rebel claiming the sovereignty; so a traitor of the worst, most dangerous, and criminal character against the majesty of God. Unless God is to be dethroned, conscience must know His will and do it for itself, and leave all others free to do the same.

That in this state of ignorance, error, and corruption there will be difficulties on every hand in carrying out the simple will of God in social relations is certainly true; but so is it in the case of

every individual. But if that were a reason for setting aside God's claims, then Satan, not God, must reign; and in truth the whole objection is a plea for Satan's reign, and a vindication of the disorder he hath introduced into the world by sin.

2. Another objection of this kind is that society, or, which is the same thing, as enunciated by a foreign writer of some note (Vinet), the State has no conscience, and, therefore, cannot be placed under law to God. This statement, if it mean anything to the purpose of the writer, or those who adopt it, must mean that a community, in any or all of its social relations, has no conscience, and cannot, therefore, be made the subject of moral responsibility. This statement might also be met, in the same way as the former, by Paul's question —"Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" Hath not God implanted in the heart of all nations the sense of moral responsibility? Hath He not made them amenable to His judgments? "He hath prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all." If God Himself addressed His law to *one whole* people in their corporate capacity, as we have seen He did, then He addressed it to the corporate, the national, the public, the social conscience; and if one nation may have a conscience, so may every other; and that God punishes nations as such for their sins, all history demonstrates, all nations have owned it. They have felt the divine displeasure, and sought to avert it: "When He

afflicted them, then they have sought Him;" though it were only feeling after Him that they might find Him, like the Athenians, who, delivered from pestilence, raised in their city an altar to the unknown God, their supposed deliverer. Paul did not say they had done wrong in acknowledging God, but that, as a community, they might worship Him aright, he said—"Him therefore whom ye ignorantly worship, do I declare unto you," "Him whom, by the law of nature and your own wisdom, ye do not know, Him by the revelation of the Spirit of God, whom Jesus Christ, risen and glorified, hath sent according to His promise, do I make known unto you as the proper object of public adoration." Why there should be a national and social conscience to recognise the moral government of God, speaking on the principles of the law of natural religion and of the Israelitish economy, and no public conscience to recognise God, speaking in His law revealed by His Son from heaven, and by His servants the apostles, the Lord working with their work, mighty works and signs following, it is not easy to see.

Duty, as we have formerly shown, refers to an authority. An authority must be expressed by a law. A law must take effect on a being having a capacity and an obligation to own it; in other words, having a conscience. Social duties must, therefore be owned and acknowledged by a social, public, common, or national conscience, according

to the nature of the duty to be discharged. If there be no public conscience in the widest sense, in the sense of the national conscience or conscience of nations, then not only can there be no law of nations, but there can be no conscience in the most limited social relations—none beyond each individual, none in the family, none in the community, none in the congregation, none in the Church, more than in the State.

In short, if there be no social conscience, there can be no social duty; and socialism, falsely so called, in its worst form and fashion, is established; that is to say, a multitude capable of affecting each other to a tremendous extent, but having no moral bonds, no law, no rule, no authority but that established by simple brute force, rendered more awfully formidable by demoniac intelligence to guide it.

But conscience, after all, is only the human soul judging of right and wrong under a divine rule and a divine responsibility; and what is duty to an individual is duty to any number of individuals associated together, or to any corporate association or representation of the whole. And so we have seen God dealt with the whole Israelites, and with them through Moses and their elders, or heads of their tribes, and these transacting through the same mediation of Moses, who was *God's* choice and *their* choice; and so the public conscience is addressed in the same way, and under the same responsibilities as the individual con-

science; so that this saying, that the State has no conscience, paraded as it has been as a great philosophical discovery, is none other than a transparent sophism—in short, a piece of social atheism, subversive of all rule and authority, of all social equity and security, of all defence to the weak against the strong, of the oppressed against the oppressor, of the slave against the tyrant.

3. Another of these disorganising principles is, that all Old Testament authority is done away in Christ under the New.

Leading to Christ, and receiving fulfilment in Christ, is a very different thing from receiving contradiction and subversion. The outward ceremonial things, that were never intended to be anything else but temporary and ceremonial, and which may be shaken and removed, may be taken away. Not so those eternal principles of moral obligation, which cannot be shaken, and which remain in their obligation so long as the social relations which they regulated remain; and so, instead of the Old Testament ceasing either to rule or instruct under the New, the New itself declares—"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were aforetime written for our learning." The denial of this principle would subvert all social morality, and men might live like beasts; and such is the tendency of these theories and effects that are in cogitation at the present day. Witness the Sabbath and the marriage-laws, in every degree and of every kind. They are

founded in religion, natural and revealed; and if the principles we are maintaining be denied, there cannot then be either duty or law.

4. Another most dangerous and disorganising theory is, that the law of God is now set aside to the Christian, not only on its condemning but commanding power; that obedience is a privilege only, and not a duty; that we are "not under the law" at all, but "under grace," not to help them to obey the law, but to release from its obligation. But I must pass on.

Let me here warn you against these plausible, though shallow and very prevailing, immoral sophisms,—the more plausible and the more prevalent, that they unhappily fall in with the corrupt propensities of fallen and defiled humanity. However plausibly or elegantly expressed or pompously announced, or with whatever show of abstract reason and affectation of philosophical wisdom or depth they are propounded, they are in truth only the expression of man's rebellion and corruption. Popery, Paganism, Infidelity, and modern Socialism, or ancient Epicureanism, all adapt and address themselves, not to man's higher, but his lower nature; and, therefore, all harmonise in seeking to remove the individual and society from direct responsibility to God by His own law, that they may set up corrupt humanity on the throne of God.*

Man cannot exist and act without some way of

* See Les Perspectives, &c., p. 156; Ilyades, &c.

satisfying, if it cannot silence, conscience; and it is a demoniacal refinement to remove not only the conscience from direct responsibility to God, the Lord of the conscience, and whom it is bound to obey, but to remove all social relations from the dominion of conscience and of God's law together. Men will always seek, even the most wicked men will always seek, to justify their conduct by reasons, and reasons that profess to defer to what is right. That they may escape self-condemnation for their bad deeds, they set themselves to subvert the rule—the law of God, and to corrupt conscience—the judge, removing them altogether out of the way. This course is not confined to the class of thinkers, as they pompously call themselves. This class may be ahead of their fellows in the power of setting forth the corrupt suggestions of a depraved heart; but the rude and ignorant profligate keeps pace with them in the thing itself, and the reasons of the sceptic and atheist and cultivated infidel are just the views and feelings of the coarse and vulgar profligate elegantly expressed—the same body of sin and corruption, more elegantly dressed and carefully veiled, — in short, whited sepulchres, beautiful without, but within full of rottenness and all manner of uncleanness.

IV.

The Relative Advantages or Disadvantages of these Theories on the one hand, and of those Principles on the other.

REFLECT for a little on the relative advantages of the two plans—the one that would absolve human society, all human social relations—for they must stand or fall together — from the obligations of the moral law of God revealed in His Word; and the other, that which holds them bound to receive it, and own subjection to it. To whom would the contempt and rejection of God's moral law be an advantage? Would it be an advantage to a nation, theoretically or practically? Theoretically, does it commend itself to the natural reason that to a nation there should be no God?—to its rulers, its senates, its benches of judges, its fleets and armies, its prisons, its hospitals, there should be no recognition of God, of His presence, His law?—no moral rule of what is just, and true, and good? Would it indicate a purer reason,, higher wisdom, more exalted greatness, or afford nobler happiness? No; but in every way the reverse; and with infinite force of reason as well as divine authority, God says, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Of

the ancient Israelitish rulers it was said, "They have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" All history demonstrates the truth of these sayings. France, reposing on a volcano, or rather, tossed on it, has been for the last sixty years on a sea of fire, ever since it nationally declared there is no God, and now bowing down to him who sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God, is a standing lesson to the nations of their truth. Whence come wars and fightings among men? Come they not hence, even of their lusts, which war against the soul? Is it not the fact that in the innate sentiments of humanity, fallen as it is, nations have been and are respected and honoured, even in the sight of the other nations, as they have observed the law of God? So God knew would be the case when He said by Moses—(Deut. iv. 5)—"Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whether ye go to possess it. Keep therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

What greatness or wisdom could there be in materialising human society, making men in their national and social capacities Atheists, Sadducees, or Epicureans? Would it exalt a *man* to make him only something of a more refined and civilised brute? Would such a process elevate a *family*, refine, or purify it, or promote its peace and happiness and dignity? Would it make the servant be better treated or cared for—more secure against passion, violence, or injustice? Would it better protect the master or employer from dishonesty, fraud, unfaithfulness, disobedience, or indolent neglect? What makes the difference between the subject of a free state and that of a despotism, either single or many-headed? What but the acknowledgment and reign of justice, truth, and mercy? What the difference between the free-born servant and the serf-born slave? What the difference between the humane, responsible master, and the brutal or lawless slave-driver? What, but the recognition of God's moral law regulating the conduct of superiors, inferiors, and equals?

To whomsoever the infidel and the ungodly may be the friends, they are not the friends, but the worst enemies, of the helpless, the poor, and defenceless. They strip them of their last refuge, the appeal to the tribunal of God, who judgeth righteously.

But would the ruler be a gainer by being absolved from law to God? If it be a gain to be left to his own wild will on the giddy height of power, to

indulge without control the lusts and passions which greatness so fearfully stimulates and pampers, and to be driven headlong at last to destruction by the wild waves of popular tumult, or destroyed by the dagger of outraged humanity, or eaten up of worms, then it might be an advantage to them, and your Neros, Caligulas, and Herods, have been the happiest of men. Would such a state of things elevate the dignity of the magistrate of any degree? It would make him, as Richard Baxter says, "A kind of secular animal, to care only for the body," and for that he might have said, "as suited himself."

On the other hand, in all the relations to which reference has been made, the advantages of their being under law to God are obvious and clear. The Bible recognises this principle when it says (2 Sam. xxiii. 2–4), "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

What other scenes should we behold throughout the nations than those which men are, and ever have been called to witness, if rulers ruled in the fear of God like Josiah, who read in the Book of the law of God, had it engraven on his heart, and discharged all his duties to the subject in all its

authority and sanction! What justice, goodness, mercy, fidelity in the exercise of his functions, in the application of all his faculties, and the means intrusted to him for the public and individual weal! What a happiness to the ruler and to the community, if the subject and the citizen obeyed them that had the rule over them, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake, fearing God, honouring the king, giving honour to whom honour, tribute to whom tribute! What a blessing to the buyer if the seller acted rigidly in the fear of God, and in obedience to His law, and he knew there was no injustice, overreaching, or fraud! To the seller, on the other hand, if there were no evasion of men's lawful debts, because God has said, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." To the servant, because God hath said, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master is in heaven." To the master, because God hath said, "Servants, obey in all things your masters, according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not to men." What a blessing to a people if ministers discharged their duties as stewards who must be faithful and answer unto God! And to ministers and church-rulers, if people obeyed them that have the rule over them and admonish them, because they watch for souls as those that must give an account, and remem-

bered that they that labour at the altar must live by the altar.

In short, did men act in all their social relations as under law to God, the frightful desert of this world would yet rejoice and blossom as the rose, and righteousness and peace would spring forth before all the nations. Such a time will yet come, when the dominion of Him whose right it is to rule, shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. The Lord hasten it in His time—"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

THE END.

PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY
EDINBURGH AND LONDON